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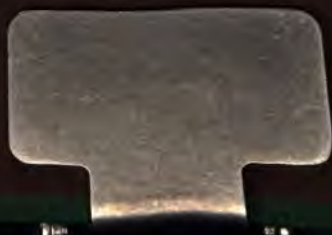
HEATHER AND HAREBELL

By
EMMA MARSHALL

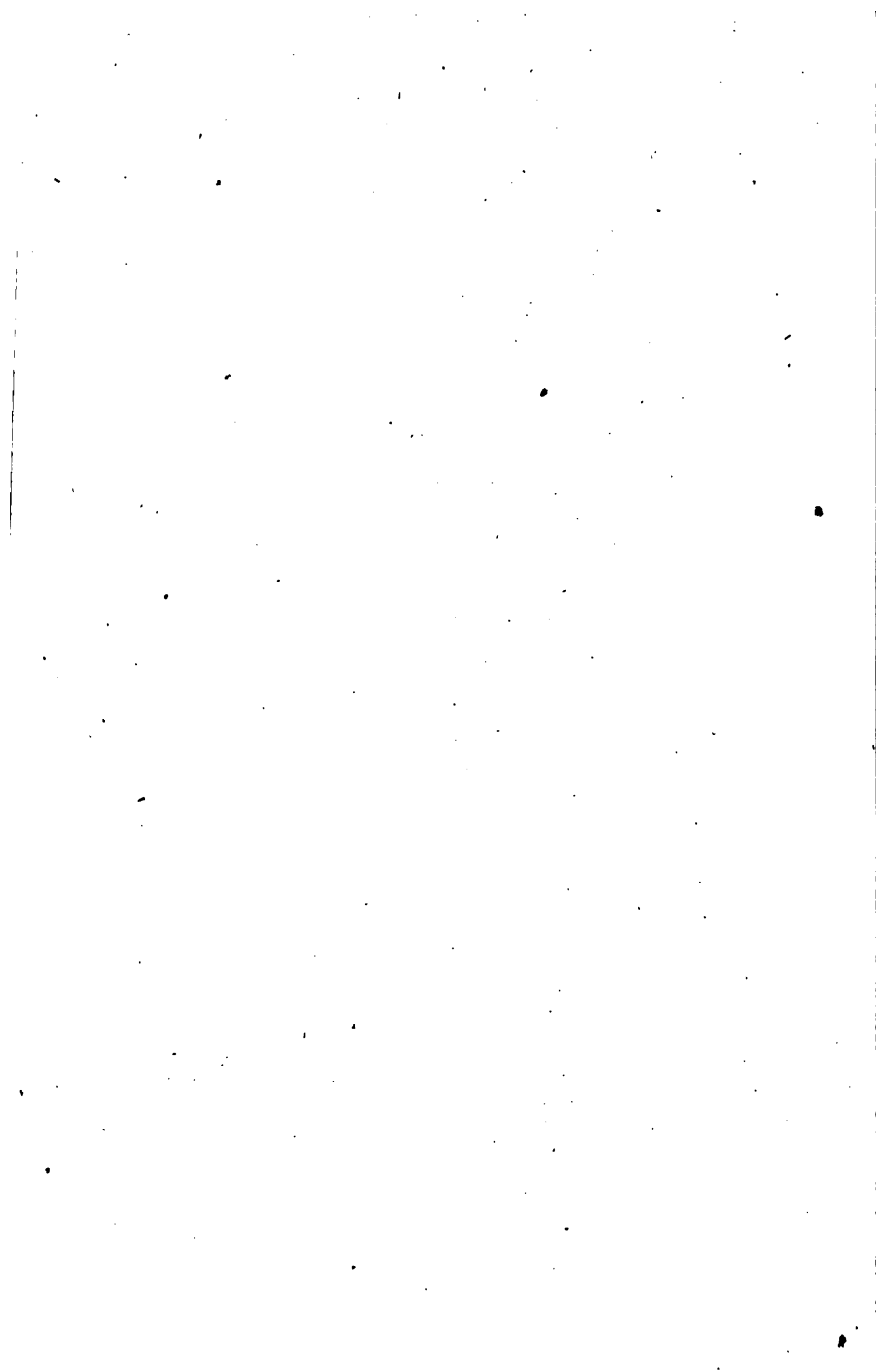




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HEATHER AND HAREBELL.

Ballantyne Press
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HEATHER AND HAREBELL.

A Story for Children.

BY

EMMA MARSHALL,

AUTHOR OF

"RUBY AND PEARL," "THREE LITTLE SISTERS," ETC.



LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.

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TO
My Little Friends,
JOHN HOPE PERCIVAL
AND
PHILIP EDWARD PERCIVAL,
In Memory of
HAPPY DAYS AT MEREDITH.

Christmas, 1880.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A BOY AND A "PICTURE"	I
II. THE GRANGE	15
III. THE LAME SQUIRREL	28
IV. "THE WRONG END"	35
V. THE TUTOR	44
VI. DOCTORS AND REMEDIES	54
VII. HOME TO THE FARM	63
VIII. DOUBLE LINES	72
IX. BOB'S RESOLVE	84
X. WHAT A PEACEMAKER CAN DO	92
XI. WEASELS AND MOLES	101
XII. DARKNESS ON THE MOOR	110
XIII. SEEKING THE LOST	119
XIV. A LONG, LONG NIGHT	130
XV. RECOVERED	139
XVI. A SECRET	147
XVII. THE WREN'S NEST	156
XVIII. PARTINGS	165
XIX. THE FIRST DAY'S JOURNEY	175
XX. PARIS	182


CHAPTER	PAGE
XXI. THE STORY OF THE TIGER . . .	191
XXII. THE SUNNY SOUTH . . .	198
XXIII. VILLA MARIETTA . . .	207
XXIV. LUCIA, THE DONKEY-WOMAN . . .	218
XXV. WET DAYS . . .	229
XXVI. "THE SWALLOW" . . .	238
XXVII. SUNSHINE AND SHADOW . . .	250
XVIII. SUSPENSE . . .	258
XXIX. PARTING . . .	264
XXX. MATTIME ON THE MOOR . . .	271

HEATHER AND HAREBELL.



CHAPTER I.

A BOY AND A "PICTURE."

HE little village of Canaton lies in the very heart of the North Devon moors. Rugged tors, like old castles, rise in all directions. Grim and stern these rocky piles look in winter, and as if they might be the dwelling-places of the giants of old fairy-tales, who kept there mysterious treasures, collected year by year in nightly raids over the country.

Hount Tor is one of these castle-looking rocks, and after climbing over rough shale and loose stones from Canaton, you come at last to smooth turf, broken only by big boulders of granite which crop up at intervals. Here rabbits play at hide-and-seek ; here the air is sweet with the scent of the golden gorse ; and here, on the May-day of which I write, lay

what at first sight you might have thought anything but what it was—a boy! Yes, a boy, whose tough suit of navy serge had scarcely been tough enough to resist the tear of brambles and the wear of rough climbing over the stones, to say nothing of the desperate plunges through brown pools, and the following the course of little tinkling rills, in search of the hundred and one treasures in which country-bred boys delight. The navy-blue knickerbockers of this boy—Heathcote Dalton—were of course continued by stout blue stockings and finished by a pair of thick boots. As he lay on his face on the soft turf, this pair of knickerbockered legs were beating a backward tattoo on the ground, up and down, down and up, like two sledge hammers. When they were down, there was for a moment revealed to those who might happen to be behind a broad back, and a thick ridge of very curly hair, on the top of which was set a very old and battered straw hat. A pair of sturdy arms, with the elbows well dug into the turf, supported the face, which you will see presently, when the continuous tattoo of the legs stops, and, with a great roll, Heathcote turns over and sits upright. His face was a frank and open one, all the beauty of the child still lingering in round, soft outline, in bright rosy colour, and dimpling smiles. Such eyes as Heathcote's are a pleasure to look into, so clear and bright, and softened by their fringe of dark

lashes, which are so much darker than the sunny hair heaped above the square white brow. Heathcote's nose was short, and, I think, a little inclined upwards. His mouth was wide, and there were yet several gaps in the new teeth; for Heathcote was not quite ten years old, though size and height and general manliness seemed to contradict this assertion whenever it was made. Heathcote lived with his mother in a white cottage just outside the village of Canaton. Two years before this May-time his father, who was the rector of the parish and of another village some miles away, had died of a fever, and a little brother had been laid by his side in the churchyard in less than a month.

Mrs. Dalton clung to the place where she had been so happy, and where God had also sent her such deep sorrow. Thus, when she left the rectory, instead of going to live in Exeter, or Plymouth, or Torquay, she decided to live on amongst the scenes so dear and so familiar, till Heathcote's education should render it absolutely necessary for her to leave them.

Now, many of Mrs. Dalton's acquaintances, some of her friends, and two or three of her relations, looked upon this decision of hers to remain at Canaton as a most unwise one—"so far out of the world, such a rough, uncultivated life for Heathcote, running wild over these moors, with no companions but

the rabbits and mountain sheep, learning nothing but the names of the flowers and the flight of the birds. What would Heathcote become?"

I am not going to look forward to the far future now. My story has to do, not with what Heathcote may be, but with what he is, as he leaps up from the turf, gives a rapid glance at the shadow cast by the topmost ridge of the tor, and knowing it must be nearly one o'clock, he began to descend to the level of the village with quick elastic bounds, which took him fast enough over the bed of loose, flat stones, over another expanse of smooth, flower-besprinkled turf, then down a narrow lane with a tangled copse on one side and a high hedge on the other, finally across a wooden bridge which spanned the little brown rill which had come singing down from the hills by Heathcote's side, and now lay in a deep crystal pool by the garden gate, which swung back as the boy touched it, and admitted him to the garden of Tor Cottage, which was his home.

"Am I late, Penny?" he asked, in his high-pitched but musical boyish treble, as a woman came into the porch at the sound of his step.

"I have had such a run after a real humming-bird moth. I know it was one, and"——

"Hush, Master Heathcote, don't shout like that, for there's a lady and a young gentleman in the drawing-room. Now, do come in and let me put

you tidy before they see you. You are not fit to be seen, and the young gentleman is—well," continued Penny, at a loss for an adjective, "is—a picture!"

All this time Penny was drawing Heathcote's sturdy frame towards a little room at the back of the cottage, where she sat and worked when her duties in the kitchen were over. Here she always kept a comb and brush and soap-and-water for Heathcote's use, that he might not "gallop upstairs" every time he came in and wanted tidying.

"Who are they?" Heathcote asked, dipping his face into the cold water, while Penny began to smooth the tangled mass of curls at the same moment.

"There, that'll do. Oh, bother my hands! they are always brown; and who are they, that you make such a fuss?"

"The lady came in a beautiful pony carriage, and sent it away when she found your mamma was at home. Such ponies! as like as two peas, and as white as snow."

"Oh, come!" said Heathcote, somewhat reassured, "I shall like to see them;" and then, disregarding the faithful Penny's entreaties that he would pull up his left stocking, for it was all in a ridge, Heathcote tossed back his hair, and running up the narrow passage, opened the door of the little parlour called by

Penny's courtesy the drawing-room, with a suddenness which made the lady seated with her back to it start and look round.

"Gently, Heathcote! This is my boy," his mother said, with that ring of tender pride in her voice which had something of sadness in it also, as she added, "My only child."

There was no shyness about Heathcote. He came forward with outstretched hand and said, "How do you do?" and then turning to the "boy like a picture," of whom Penny had spoken, he said again, "How do you do?"

The "picture" was a fair delicate child in a suit of white serge, which certainly did not look fitted for moor life. A wide sailor collar was turned back to display a pale blue shirt, and a knot of ribbon of the same colour fastened it. The child's face was very pale, but a delicate rose flush spread over his cheek as Heathcote's strong little brown hand gave his slim fingers a firm grip. The "picture's" hair was cut straight across his forehead and hung in long golden locks down his back. His eyes matched the ribbon round his collar. They were large and wistful, and his mouth was small, and had a sad droop about it unnatural in a child; and his voice was so low that Heathcote could hardly catch the "Quite well, thank you," with which he responded to his greeting.

"This is Mrs. St. Aubyn's little boy, Heathcote," Mrs. Dalton said. "He is about your age."

"It seems almost impossible," Mrs. St. Aubyn said with a sigh. "Bellfield is so very, very much smaller. He will be ten years old in July, and you, my dear boy?"

"I shall not be ten till August," Heathcote said, very sorry that the boy Penny called a picture, and he felt inclined to call a girl, should have the advantage of him in age.

"Really!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Aubyn, "it seems almost incredible. Don't you think you have made a mistake, and that you are nearly eleven instead of nearly ten? Why, you are a head taller than Bello."

"More than that," said Heathcote, proudly looking down on the pale face turned up to him.

"I say," he went on, "would you like to come and see Busy, my dog, you know? She has got some pups, and they are such beauties; and I'll give you one if you like. Mayn't I, mother?—that is, when they are old enough to go away from Busy."

The child put his hand into Heathcote's instantly, and Mrs. St. Aubyn said—

"Yes, you may go, darling, but you will not touch the dog. Take care he does not, please."

"All right!" said Heathcote. "Nobody touches Busy when she has puppies; she won't let them."

The two boys went off together, and the mothers were left alone.

"What a fine boy yours is, Mrs. Dalton. I do hope you will allow him to come up to the Grange and see my Bello. I have come to bury myself in this remote country for a few months simply on the child's account. How do you manage about education?"

"I teach Heathcote myself," Mrs. Dalton said; "his lessons are not very difficult at present. I dare say he is backward for his age."

"Well, I am going to have a tutor for Bello when I can find the right person. I have tried two, and they have been quite the wrong; but my boy's brother, Randolph, wrote that he thinks he has hit upon the very man. Now do tell me how you manage your boy; he does look so strong and healthy, while my Bello is but a little delicate flower."

"Heathcote is out in this bracing air a great deal," Mrs. Dalton said. "He has many amusements which keep him much on the moors. He has a collection of butterflies and bird's eggs, and that little aquarium is a perpetual pleasure, with its strange medley of little tadpoles and newts, and other creatures."

"Oh, what horrible wretches!" Mrs. St. Aubyn exclaimed. "Do they bite or sting?"

"They are all harmless, and, I hope, happy in

their imprisonment," Mrs. Dalton said, with a smile.

"What a nice little greenhouse that is!" Mrs. St. Aubyn said.

"Yes; my landlord was so kind as to build it for me when I came here from the Rectory, as he knew how fond I was of flowers. Heathcote and I spend some time amongst our plants, and we do nearly all the gardening ourselves."

"How happy you seem, while I am torn with anxiety about my treasure. You know I have a stepson who is very fond of little Bello, but laughs at me for being so anxious. The Grange belongs to him, and it was his idea that I should come to it in the spring with the child and try what plenty of Devonshire cream and fresh air would do. Oh, my darling, take care!"

This was addressed to Bello, who came in with a little black-and-tan puppy in his hands, saying—

"Look, mamma, look! Heathcote says I may have it—not to-day, but in a week—little beauty!"

Alas! the white suit so spotless ten minutes before was marked with several stains from the puppy's paws, and Bello had also fallen down in the garden while inspecting Heathcote's doves, and a very big brown mark was on one knee.

"May I have it, mamma, may I?"

"Is it safe?" Mrs. St. Aubyn asked; "will it bite?"

"It has got no teeth yet, to speak of," said Heathcote, "and Busy's pups are always well-behaved, aren't they, mother?"

"Well, we will see about it, darling. Give it back to your little friend now, and we must order the carriage. I told the groom to rest the ponies at the little inn we passed in the village."

"May I run and order the carriage, mother?" Heathcote asked eagerly, visions of the white ponies, as like as "two peas," rising before him. "May I, mother?"

"Yes, dear."

And Heathcote raced off, leaving Bello with the puppy in his arms, which kept up the little querulous cry common to all puppies of six days' old.

"Bello, darling, do put down that ugly little beast. Can you take it away, Mrs. Dalton?"

"Give it to me," Mrs. Dalton said, "and I will call Penelope."

But Bello had no idea of giving up his treasure; he held it tighter and tighter, saying—

"Oh, you little sweet! Oh, you dear, soft thing!"

"Give it up, darling. Oh, *don't* let it lick your mouth! O Bello! it's very naughty not to mind what I say! Now, darling, *do* be good."

But Bello had never been taught obedience, and he looked calmly into his mother's face and said, with a nod—

"I am going to keep it and call it Tiny. I am not going to part with it."

"Hush! sweet boy," exclaimed Mrs. St. Aubyn, whispering something in the child's ear.

But Mrs. Dalton quietly took the little fat, black, shiny thing from Bello's hands, and though his pale face puckered, he yielded without a word, as she said—

"Tiny must go back to his mother. Here, Penelope, please take the puppy."

Penelope, who was in the passage, held out her apron and received the puppy, saying—

"The carriage is coming round, ma'am."

At the same moment the two white ponies drew up by the little gate, and Heathcote, seated by the groom, had had the supreme delight of driving the ponies up the village.

"Aren't they beauties, mother?" he called; "and they are named Snowball and Daisy."

"You must come to the Grange very soon," Mrs. St. Aubyn said. "Shall I send for him to-morrow?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Dalton.

"Oh no! thanks. Heathcote can come to the Grange alone, and if you will allow me, I will call for him in the evening about six o'clock, and we shall have a pleasant walk home together."

"But it is quite a mile from here," Mrs. St. Aubyn said. "Won't it kill you with fatigue?"

Mrs. Dalton laughed.

"Thanks ! I am a very good walker. Now, Heathcote, leave the ponies."

Heathcote was standing at the heads of Snowball and Daisy stroking their noses, but instantly came to her side.

She put her arm round his shoulder, and so they stood while Mrs. St. Aubyn and Bello, a cloud yet on his fair face, seated themselves in the carriage.

"We shall meet to-morrow. Good-bye, good-bye !"

And then the groom sprang up to the back seat, and little Bello's melancholy good-bye, good-bye ! was lost in the clatter of the four pairs of hoofs as Snowball and Daisy trotted off.

"Mother," said Heathcote, "how did you come to know them ?"

"Mrs. St. Aubyn is a distant cousin of dear father's, Heathcote, and has come to the Grange, which belongs to Mr. Randolph St. Aubyn, for her boy's health."

"I don't like them," said Heathcote stoutly. "So fine and smart. And, mother, isn't he more like a Miss Molly than a boy ? Fancy you letting my hair hang down to my waist, and coming out in all that finery ! I don't want to go to the Grange, except to see the ponies."

"Dinner has been ready for half an hour, ma'am," said Penelope from the passage, "and the fish is

spoiled." Penelope was an old servant and had served Mrs. Dalton from her babyhood. "Dear me! did you ever see such a picture as that little gentleman? He's quite beautiful, that he is!"

Heathcote shrugged his shoulders. "I don't like picture boys," he said.

CHAPTER II.

THE GRANGE.



“THE GRANGE” was a low-roofed, many-gabled house, lying close under sloping ground, broken up by the large limestone boulders, and presenting a succession of miniature tors, which were in shape and form very much like the larger ones of this wild district. In front a drive through a belt of larches and firs swept round to the old porch, over which was a stone shield with carved arms, nearly worn away and scarcely to be traced through the wealth of creeping plants which flung their tendrils round it in every direction.

Heathcote had often passed the Grange in his rambles, and had wondered why no one lived in such a large old house. Now, as the iron gate swung back at a vigorous push he gave it in the middle, he said to himself—

“What a jolly place! I wish mother could live here.”

Although full, as was natural, of the importance

of his first visit alone, he was all on the alert to watch the movements of a brisk little squirrel which was leaping from bough to bough of the trees and keeping his bright brown eye well upon the figure below, probably making up his mind as to whether he was a friend or a foe.

"There's a jump!" Heathcote exclaimed. "Well done! Have you got a wife, Master Squirrel, up there, I wonder, and some children? I'd like to see them."

Then he went on his way, the sun making lines of golden light across the path, and, touching the thick curls which nestled close round the brim of his best straw hat, made them shine like bronze.

Heathcote had scarcely touched the handle of the bell hanging in the porch before the rush of feet was heard down the long passage within, and a feeble fumbling at the door was succeeded by an indistinct murmur—

"I can't open it, Morris. Do come; make haste, Morris."

Then a dull, heavier step was heard, and a gruff voice in remonstrance as the door was at last opened, and there stood Bello and an old man-servant, without whom Mrs. St. Aubyn never stirred, and of whose life Bellfield was at once the pride and trouble. Morris had carried Bellfield's father in his arms when a baby, and had been in his grandfather's service

also. He was a man of genuine honesty, and attached to the child of his late master with an attachment of the old retainer of days gone by. Morris had much excellent common sense, and though often sharing his mistress's anxious fear about Bellfield's health, he did not sympathise with her in the plan she adopted with her only child. Indeed, it was at a hint from Morris that Bellfield's stepbrother, Mr. Randolph St. Aubyn, had written to offer the Grange to Mrs. St. Aubyn for the summer, to try, as he said, if North Devon air and cream might not help the child to get strong, and be a desirable change from the small house in Kensington, where poor little Bello was shut up in heated rooms, and petted and spoiled with every indulgence, his mother living in perpetual terror of a fit of croup, of which, it is true, Bellfield had had several sharp attacks, and to avert these very different treatment was needed.

"I thought you were never coming," Bellfield said in a whining tone. "I've been waiting about for hours and hours."

"Why, it's only just twelve," Heathcote exclaimed. "I had to do my work first before I came."

"Your work!" Bellfield said; "in the garden, do you mean?"

"No; my French exercise, and my geography and Latin verb."

"Oh, your lessons! I have lessons, and I don't do

them if I don't want to. If I say I have a headache or sneeze, then mamma lets me off. Isn't that fun?"

"You don't mean to say you sham a headache," Heathcote said with sharp surprise, "just to get off?"

Bellfield raised his large blue eyes to Heathcote's face and said—

"Yes, and I call it fun."

"I call it," Heathcote began, but he had not time to finish his sentence, for they were now at the end of the long passage, and had ascended a flight of wide stairs which led to a square corridor or ante-room, where a number of portraits of ladies and gentlemen in old-fashioned dresses looked down upon the children.

"Come and see mamma," said Bellfield; "this is her room," and Bello opened a large door and called out—

"Here's Heathcote Dalton, mamma; he wants so much to go out to the pond with my boat, and to feed the swans and ducks, mamma."

"Gently, my darling," Mrs. St. Aubyn said, laying down her pen and holding out her hand to Heathcote. "My dear boy, I am very glad to see you. Yes, dear Bello, but I dare not allow you to go to the pond with the boat without Morris. How is your mamma, Heathcote?"

"Mother is quite well," Heathcote replied, "thank you;" and when Bellfield repeated that they both wanted so much to go to the pond, he exclaimed—

"I don't want to go; I never said I did."

Bellfield's fair face flushed, and he drew down his mouth as if he were going to cry.

"It's a shame!" he said. "I have got my boat all ready, and you said I might."

"My darling, you may go with Morris; but Morris cannot be spared before luncheon. Suppose you go and show your friend the ponies and the pigeons, and then in the afternoon. I daresay Morris will be at liberty. How very careless of Elsie to leave your throat so open! The wind is in the east. You must not go out without a handkerchief;" and Mrs. St. Aubyn rose and rang the bell hastily. This brought in the person who was Bellfield's nurse and Mrs. St. Aubyn's maid, and whose patience was often sorely tried. But Elsie had learned the great lesson of self-control, which is invaluable to us all, and she bore reproaches silently.

Meantime Heathcote was getting very tired of all this. He began to wish himself back at the cottage, or hunting for the spotted moth which he had seen and all but captured the day before. Moreover, there was at the boy's heart a thought which he could hardly put into words; but he was saying to himself—

"Shamming a headache! saying I wanted to go to the pond when he had never asked me! I hate shams and lies."

At last the handkerchief was secured round the slender delicate throat and Bellfield was at liberty. He recovered his temper as soon as he and Heathcote were outside the house, and said—

“Where shall we go first?”

“To see the ponies,” was Heathcote’s prompt reply, and away they went to the stable.

Heathcote was soon engrossed with Snowball and Daisy, and the groom proposed he should ride Daisy round the stable-yard.

But this did not suit Bellfield, who had been forbidden to ride, and Heathcote good-naturedly said—

“No, thank you; I’ll wait.”

Then the two boys went round into the fir plantation, and to a summer-house ornamented with fir cones, which Heathcote admired as a work of art. Then Bellfield led the way to a little white gate opening upon a gentle descent of soft turf, and below lay the pond. The plants of the waterlily were lying on its surface, waiting for the opening of the thick green buds, which could be seen peeping up between the broad flat leaves. Like all the pools on Dartmoor, this pool, fed by mountain streamlets, was clear and limpid. It reflected the overhanging trees and the ferns or grasses on its edge, while in the middle there was, as if seen in a mirror, the blue summer-sky with little white clouds floating over it, and Heathcote exclaimed—

"This is a jolly place. Look! there is a minnow and a tadpole. I wish I had a bottle. I would catch them and take them home. It is a jolly place," he repeated.

"Yes, and it is such a shame I may not come here with my boat. I got Elsie to set the sails all right last evening."

"Oh, we can come with Morris after dinner; it will be just as much fun then; and I daresay you'll lend me a bottle—an old pickle-bottle will do—and then I can get some of these fellows."

The boys lingered by the pond for a few minutes, and then Bellfield took Heathcote to the farm, where Mrs. Forster, the farmer's wife, came from the dairy to meet them, bearing a bowl of the finest cream, "all fluffy and lumpy," as Bellfield said, and he called to Mrs. Forster to give him some.

"It is just going down to the house, my dear, for your dinner. Better not eat any now, or you'll spoil your appetite. Dear me! if this isn't Master Dalton! How do you do, sir? and how is your dear mamma? I've not seen her for a long time."

"Mother is all right, thank you," said Heathcote; "and how is your little girl?"

"There, I can hardly tell you, sir, for she is to Exeter at her grandmother's house. No better nor no worse, that's about the truth. Sam, where's your manners?"

A big fellow of fourteen now came up, with the lounging gait of a country-bred boy, blushing and laughing till his wide mouth looked as if it would never close again over the row of even white teeth.

"How are you, Sam?" Heathcote said in his frank, pleasant voice.

"Please, sir, I've got hold of that finch's egg you wanted. I left two of 'em in the nest, sir."

"That's right! Where is the egg?"

Sam lurched off to fetch the treasure, and Bellfield, having possessed himself of a big iron spoon, had gone into the dairy, and was taking mouthful after mouthful from the large pan from which Mrs. Forster had filled her bason.

"There's the bell, Master St. Aubyn," said Mrs. Forster, discovering Bellfield at last. "Well, everything in its place. Cream ain't good before meals. Why, I declare you've eaten half a pound, Master St. Aubyn," added Mrs. Forster indignantly as she gave the door of the dairy a sharp bang, and with long strides preceded the two little boys with her bowl of cream to the back entrance of the Grange.

Bellfield led the way down a narrow dark passage, and at the end Elsie was standing ready to capture the children and make them tidy for dinner. Heathcote ate his silently till a sharp discussion between Bellfield and his mother about

eating a cutlet roused his attention and made him say—

“I don’t wonder you are not hungry after all the cream;” then he stopped, saying to himself, “Mother would not like me to tell tales.”

“Cream! what cream? Do you know anything about it, Morris?”

Morris, who was filling his mistress’s glass, gravely said, “No, ma’am;” and Bellfield, pushing the cutlet behind his knife and fork, began to talk of his boat and the pond, and so the subject was changed.

But Bellfield’s loss of appetite was recurred to frequently by his mother, till Heathcote thought he would far sooner be eating one of Penny’s rice-puddings than the rich pastry with its accompaniment of Devonshire cream on which Bello really made his dinner.

The afternoon passed more pleasantly than the morning. Morris was in attendance; the boat sailed across the pond, and only made shipwreck once amongst the waterlilies. Heathcote with Morris’s assistance filled his pickle-bottle with water, and imprisoned in it two or three queer little newts and tadpoles, and was so interested in his treasures that he inspired Bellfield with the desire to begin an aquarium at once. Daisy and Snowball were visited again, and, under Morris’s careful super-

vision, both little boys rode round the stable-yard several times.

When all out-of-door pleasures were exhausted, the children went to the library, where Bellfield said he was to do his lessons when his new tutor came, and he added—

“You are to come and do your lessons with me. I heard mamma say so.”

“Oh, I don’t know about that,” Heathcote said. “Mother teaches me Latin, and French, and everything.”

“Women can’t teach Latin,” said little Bello.

“Can’t they just! Why, father taught mother when I was ever so small, that she might help me when I grew bigger, and then Bertram, with our lessons.”

“Who is Bertram?”

“My brother,” Heathcote said shortly.

“Why don’t you bring him here, then?”

“He is dead,” was Heathcote’s reply. “I mean, he is living with God—with father. Mother never likes to think of them as dead.”

“I never knew anybody like you,” Bellfield said with a sigh; “you say such funny things. How can dead people be alive? My papa is dead, and his coffin was put into a dark, cold vault.”

The two boys were now seated together in a deep window-seat; Heathcote with a book of Eastern travels on his knees, one leg crossed over the other;

Bellfield, with his arm thrown round Heathcote's neck, nestling close to his side, his fair hair shining against Heathcote's dark blue serge like gold.

"I say," Bellfield continued, "tell me all about it."

"About what?"

"Why, how dead people are *not* really dead."

"Well," said Heathcote, with some hesitation, "you see, mother could tell you better than I can; but I think I know what she means. It is that *all* of us doesn't die—some things cannot die, can't leave off, you know. How could I leave off loving mother, or how could mother leave off loving me? Then, you know, Jesus Christ died and yet lived; and that is what we do—there is a text for Easter about dying unto sin and living unto God."

"Sometimes," Bellfield said, "I hear them say I shan't live. Once when mamma and Elsie thought I was asleep, I heard mamma say, 'Dr. Forbes says if he has so many fits of croup he will die.' I know they meant me, and I was so frightened I dare not speak."

"Well," Heathcote said, "I don't think you need be awfully frightened; but I can't explain or say things properly, like mother. Some day you can talk to her. Oh, here is a picture of a real caravan! Look at the camels, and how they grow smaller and smaller as they wind along. I should like to go

through the deserts on a camel's back. This is a splendid book, and what a heap there are here in this room!"

"They are all Randolph's; he is coming here to-morrow. Randolph is not very nice; he laughs at me."

"Well, what does that matter?"

"He calls me Bella, and says my hair would make wigs for all the dolls in Paris."

"If I were you," said Heathcote, "I would ask to have my hair cut off; it's too long for a boy."

"Do you think you could cut it for me?" Bellfield said, suddenly springing up. "I know where Elsie keeps her big scissors." And he was gone before Heathcote could speak. He returned breathless in a few minutes with a large pair of scissors in one hand and a paper bag in the other.

"Look!" he said, "you can cut it off, and I'll stuff it into this bag."

Heathcote hesitated.

"Mamma said last time Randolph laughed at me she would take me to a hairdresser and have my hair cut. Oh, do—do make haste!"

The large scissors were in Heathcote's hand, little Bello was bowing his head. Click! went the sharp scissors, and one silken lock fell, when the door opened and a tall gentleman with a long light beard and blue eyes came in.

"Hallo!" he said, "what's up now?" and then seeing the position of affairs, he burst out into a long fit of laughter.

"Why, Bella, Miss Bell!" he exclaimed, "you have fallen into good hands. Shorn like a sheep, eh! and a good thing too!"

"Let Heathcote go on, Randolph, let him go on. Go on, Heathcote, please, pray do."

But Heathcote's hand was suddenly paralysed; the big scissors hung suspended by the black ribbon to which they were tied as Mrs. St. Aubyn came in followed by Heathcote's mother.

For a moment Mrs. St. Aubyn did not see what had happened, and little Bello having put the lock of hair into the paper bag, was running off, hoping to escape notice, quite forgetting that the gap in his hair would be seen from behind, and that the truth must come out.

"Stop, Bello, my dear. Why, what have you done?"

Bellfield turned back from the door with a rueful face, but Mrs. St. Aubyn asked angrily.

"How dare you cut your hair?"

"I cut it," said Heathcote sturdily. "I am awfully sorry, but he said he wanted it."

"How dare you touch my child's hair? I keep it long on purpose, as it protects him from cold," Mrs. St. Aubyn said. "It is extremely wrong, and if you are so mischievous"—


"Come, come," said Mr. Randolph St. Aubyn, "no great harm is done," for he saw Heathcote was biting his lip and his chest was heaving with mingled indignation and vexation. "The boy's hair wanted cutting, though, to be sure, the jagged chasm in the very middle of the head is not pretty; but what can't be cured must be endured, so let us say no more about it. I'll take Bellfield into Exeter to-morrow and get the other locks cut, then he will be all right. You shall come too, if you like," Mr. St. Aubyn said kindly to Heathcote, "and take a lesson in hairdressing."

But Heathcote was unable to smile or reply. He saw his mother was vexed with him, though she only said, "O Heathcote!" He felt he had been very foolish, and that he ought to have known better than to listen to Bello's entreaties.

The whole party returned to tea in the dining-room, and soon after Mrs. Dalton and Heathcote walked homewards.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAME SQUIRREL.

T has not been a very nice day, mother," Heathcote began; "I don't wish to go there any more."

"You will get on better in future, dear, and I think it will be good for you to go to the Grange to be under Bellfield's tutor."

"I had much sooner do my work with you, mother."

"Perhaps so, and we will still do our French together, and have our history and Scripture lessons; but Latin, and Greek, and arithmetic, it is better a boy should learn from a man after ten years old."

"I am not ten yet, mother."

"No, dearest; but you look and seem so much older than your years, which makes me think this opportunity of studying with Bellfield ought not to be overlooked."

"When am I to begin, mother?"

"They are to meet Mr. More at Exeter to-morrow, and you are to go over to the Grange on Monday."

"I hope I am to go to Exeter; am I, mother?"

"Mr. St. Aubyn said no more about it, and I daresay Bellfield will not be allowed to go."

"Mother, I am so glad I am not like Bellfield," Heathcote said after a silence, "so spoiled, and so selfish, and so ready to sham."

Mrs. Dalton did not speak for a moment, and when Heathcote said, "You don't like Bellfield, do you, mother?" she replied—

"Perhaps some boys who heard what you said just now would say, 'I am glad I am not like Heathcote Dalton, so conceited and satisfied with himself, and so' "——

"Stop, mother, please. I did not mean to be stuck up and conceited, but I do hate shams and"——

"My dear child, meet shams with truth; show that boy how beautiful honesty is, not by setting yourself up as superior to him, but by quietly keeping in the direct, straight way yourself. I think you have wanted a companion of your own age. Here is one sent to you, as it were, related to dear father, and thus not like a stranger. Let us try to do him good and get good ourselves from him. He is naturally, I should think, sweet and affectionate and gentle and timid, and timid natures have always a greater struggle to be absolutely true than stronger ones. Fear of reproach, fear of punishment, has made many a lie, and desire to stand well in the

esteem of others is the cause of many shams, as you call them."

Heathcote suddenly put his hand into his mother's arm and gave it a squeeze, saying—

"I'll try to do as you wish, mother." Then breaking off in boyish fashion, he sprang up the hedge and called, "Sam, is that you?"

Sam Forster's rosy face, round as a full moon, appeared above the hedge, and he said—

"Yes, Master Heathcote, and I was just coming down to the cottage with this here egg. You did not wait for it this morning."

"Oh, thank you, Sam! And what else have you got?"

"A little squirrel, sir. He has broke his leg, I think, and he has fallen out of the nest."

"Oh, what a dear little fellow! Mother, may I keep it? I'll put it in the old bird-cage, and feed it with nuts and things, and Penny will bind its leg."

"Have we not pets enough, Heathcote?—Busy and her children, the doves, the white kitten. The lame squirrel will be a great addition."

"Please, sir," said Sam, "I'd keep it for you, if you like, and when Mary comes from the hospital at Exeter, it would be a playmate for her."

"Very well, and I'll give you the old cage, Sam. May I, mother? Run on with me to the cottage; and

I'll fetch it down from the loft above the wood house. May I, mother?"

Heathcote ran off, but Sam walked by Mrs. Dalton's side, with the squirrel in one hand and the precious egg in the other.

"When do you expect your sister home, Sam?"

"Next week, ma'am. She is at grandmother's now, for the gentlemen at the hospital can't do any more for her. She'll never walk right again, and she'll always be a cripple."

"Have you ever found out how she met with the accident?"

Sam shook his head.

"Nothing nor nobody will make her tell, but we have our thoughts. She was pushed down those steps by one of the Curtis girls, that's certain, but which of 'em we shall never know. Mother is getting over it now, but not father; he'll go miles round so as not to meet one of that lot; he was so fond of Mary, and no wonder. It is hard to see her on a crutch, and"—

Sam stopped, that rosy, merry face of his clouded over as he spoke of his sister, and added—

"I feel the more sorry even for a lame squirrel because of her. Skipping about, like her, so merry this morning, and now with a broken leg, and taken away from its nest, poor thing!"

"Well, come in, Sam," Mrs. Dalton said when they

reached the cottage gate. "There is Master Heathcote with the cage, and you had better go into the kitchen and let Penelope bind up the squirrel's leg before you take him to the farm."

Penelope grumbled a little at having another dumb creature to look after, but was relieved when she found that she was only expected to act the part of a surgeon to the squirrel's leg, and that his home was to be up at Forster's farm.

Heathcote superintended the operation with keen interest, and was very happy when the leg was securely bandaged. Squirry was consigned to a soft corner in the cage, where he had made an inviting bed of hay and leaves and cotton wool, where any squirrel might be proud to lay his head.

"I quite believe he belongs to the squirrel I saw as I went up to the Grange this morning," Heathcote said, as he saw Sam Forster depart with his treasure.

"There are scores and scores of squirrels in the woods, Master Heathcote; it is not likely this is the same as you saw."

"I wish I could have kept it," Heathcote sighed out.

"Kept that squirrel! No indeed; we are overrun with dumb animals as it is, though I don't complain of dumb animals. They are better than them that chatter sometimes. That girl Patty Curtis has been

here this evening with my bonnet she has trimmed for me, and how she did talk! Like a mill-wheel her tongue is—round and round—and no sense to it. But she knows how a bonnet ought to look,” continued Penny, taking a large white straw bonnet from a blue bandbox. “There! that bonnet is real Dunstable, and I have had it altered for the fashion, and Patty Curtis undertook it. Ain’t it pretty, Master Heathcote? Don’t the bow sit well now? And she has made out the three yards of ribbon wonderful,” said Penelope, touching the bow with tender caressing hand. “There! I might have tried till Christmas before I had made a bow like that. Patty has been talking about Sam Forster’s little girl; she feels it kind of hard that all the village should say her sisters caused the accident to Mary’s back. Children will be children and boys will be boys; and if they were all galloping about the rocks and one fell, who is to blame?”

“Well,” Heathcote said, “if the Curtises knew she had fallen, it was odd they never came home to tell, but left her lying there as they did.”

“Yes, there’s truth in that,” said Penelope, consigning her bonnet to the box, and bearing it up the back-stairs leading to her little bedroom in triumph.

Then Heathcote went to look after Busy and her family, his doves, and the white kitten Bianca, and then he and his mother read the evening Psalm with


Penny, and in another hour the curly head was laid upon the pillow, and Heathcote was asleep.

His mother, shading her candle with her hand, went to look at her child before she went to bed. A yearning tenderness filled her heart as she looked down on that strong, healthful, active boy, lying so quietly and so calmly in the sweet, sound sleep of childhood. Mrs. Dalton felt a change had come in the life of herself and Heathcote, for new interests and fresh companions had arisen. It had come unawares, and it seemed that what she had desired for Heathcote had been given her. If Mr. More were what Mr. Randolph St. Aubyn represented, how happy she should be about Heathcote. Yet he was her only one, and she could almost grudge the giving up any part of him or his education into other hands.

“Dear boy, dear child!” she murmured, “may our Heavenly Father guard him and keep him from evil!” And with this prayer at her heart, Heathcote’s mother pressed a light kiss on the boy’s fair brow, and left him for the night.

CHAPTER IV.

"THE WRONG END."

EATHCOTE was up with the lark the next morning. He always had a great deal of business to get through before breakfast. First there was Busy to liberate from her house, and the puppies to be allowed to sprawl on the grass in the garden; then there was the doves' cage to clean and the aquarium to inspect. Heathcote was particularly anxious this morning to see how the inhabitants from the lily pond at the Grange were settling in their new home. Alas! two newts lay dead amongst the pebbles and grass at the bottom, and the tadpole was in a very feeble condition. Heathcote removed the dead newts and let in a fresh stream of water to invigorate the tadpole, and said to himself—

"The neck of the bottle I brought them home in was too narrow; they got jammed too tight as they were put in, poor things!"

He was disturbed from the contemplation of the

aquarium by a violent squealing and rushing in the little garden. Bianca, the white kitten, had invited one of Busy's puppies to a game of play by gently patting its fat shiny back with one of her soft paws. Busy, who had taken a scamper into the orchard behind the garden to stretch her legs and inspect the hole by the stream where a couple of water-rats had a nest, was soon recalled by the cries of her children, and rushed after Bianca with such fury that Heathcote had to pull her by the tail before she would let go her hold of Bianca's thick fluffy coat.

The squealing, and mewing, and growling, added to Heathcote's ringing words, "For shame, Busy! be quiet, Busy!" brought Penny to the rescue, and even made Mrs. Dalton open her window, which looked into the garden, to see what could be the matter.

"It's all right now, mother," Heathcote said, looking up at his mother with a flushed, excited face. "But Bianca is sitting up in the laburnum tree, and is in a dreadful rage. Her coat is all puffed up, and her tail as big as your fur thing you wear in winter round your throat. Wasn't it stupid of her to touch a puppy? though I don't think it need have yelled like that, mother." As Mrs. Dalton disappeared from the window, Heathcote called out—

"I wonder if I shall really go to Exeter to-day?"

"Go to Exeter, my dear?"

"Yes, you know Mr. St. Aubyn said he would take Bellfield to the hairdresser's, and that I should go with them and meet Mr. More, the tutor; I may go if they call for me, mother?"

"Go in now, dear, and learn your Scripture lesson for me, and look over your Latin verb."

"But, mother, if I go to Exeter I need not look over them, because"——

"Do not trust to 'if's,' Heathcote; it is only a quarter-past seven; there is yet three-quarters of an hour to breakfast time."

Heathcote went to the dining-room, where he kept his books, and sat down to the little table in the window where he always prepared his lessons.

The window was wide open, and the laburnum tree by the gate was hanging its golden tassels over it. Bees were humming and birds twittering, and two hedge-sparrows that had their nest in the thick ivy which covered the wall of the little square garden, were flying backwards and forwards to feed their children.

Heathcote leaned his elbows on the table and his head on his hands, and drummed with his feet on the floor. A book was certainly open before him, but he was not looking at it. There was a cloud on his fine open face, and one could see at a glance that Heathcote was not in the best temper this morning.

"It does not look much like learning your lessons;

you got up at the wrong side of the bed this morning," Penelope said, as she came in with the cloth and the cups and saucers. "You do wear your shoes out rubbing like that on the carpet. It is a shocking bad habit to fidget and drum like that."

Heathcote took no notice of Penny, but drummed and fidgeted more noisily than ever. He had a bit of string between his lips, and he was pulling it backwards and forwards against his teeth and making a twanging sound as he did so. This twanging sound kept time with the drumming of his feet and to a voice within.

"I wish I could go to Exeter; it's a shame if they don't call for me. I want to go to look at the stuffed owl in Queen Street. Mr. Plummer said he saw it there—a horned owl. I wonder how Bellfield is this morning? What fun it was to see his jagged hair! I don't care for Bellfield, little sneak; but I want to go to Exeter, and I think Mr. St. Aubyn is so jolly."

This is a specimen of Heathcote's thoughts, and they were spun out indefinitely. At last a little hand-bell rang in the passage; it was Penelope's sign that she was ready for prayers, and Heathcote started.

"Why, how soon Penny is ringing the bell! I have not looked at my Psalm and I don't know my verb. Never mind; I'll learn them after breakfast, and perhaps I shall go to Exeter, so I need not bother."

"Good morning, darling," was his mother's greet-

ing. "Why, you have not put the books ready for me!"

Heathcote gave a great stretch, and went in a listless way for the Bibles and Prayer-books which they always used at prayers.

Mrs. Dalton read one verse of a Psalm for the day, and Heathcote and Penny the alternate one. Then Mrs. Dalton read a few verses from the New Testament, and said some very simple words about it, to which Heathcote usually listened with deep attention.

"It is like mother thinking out loud," he used to say; but this morning his spirit was not in tune, and his mind wandered from the verses which his mother read in her low, musical, clear voice.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

"Mother thinks I was judging Bellfield yesterday. So I was, but then I know I am right," he thought.

You will see by this that Heathcote was by no means a boy without a fault. It is always best to draw a picture faithfully, and I should be wrong if I attempted to tell the story of a child's life without any shadows in it.

The morning did not pass happily. Of course Heathcote did not know his lessons, and his mother turned him back with them. His eyes were, con-

tinually turning to the gate to see if there was any one coming from the Grange to invite him to go to Exeter. But when the clock struck eleven, he felt sure his chance was over for the day.

As he had been so inattentive and ill-prepared with his work, Mrs. Dalton gave him an extra bit of translation to do for her, and this kept him from his usual long ramble on the moor.

Mr. Parker, the clergyman who had succeeded Heathcote's father, called about twelve, and Heathcote heard him talking to his mother in the garden about the new inhabitants at the Grange.

"He is a very delicate child, but ruined with coddling. They are all gone to Exeter to-day in the close carriage. I saw it pass about nine o'clock, the windows shut, and the boy muffled up as if it were winter. Where is your boy to-day?"

"He is finishing his lessons," Mrs. Dalton said, "but he must have done them now, I think." Then Mrs. Dalton went to the window and called, "Heathcote, come and speak to Mr. Parker."

So gentle was his mother's voice, and so sweet was her face, that Heathcote felt thoroughly ashamed of all the trouble he had given her. He said in a husky voice, "I'm coming, mother;" and then, as he bent over the dictionary to find the last word, a great tear fell plump upon the page. Heathcote hated to cry, and still more to be

seen crying; so it was two or three minutes before he had put away his books and was in the garden.

Mr. Parker was inspecting a bed of anemones, and telling Mrs. Dalton that she was a far better gardener than the one he had at the Rectory.

"That scarlet one is magnificent; it reminds me of the anemones at Cannes. I remember"—and Mr. Parker stopped.

"Ah! my boy, how are you? I was asking your mother about you. What lovely flowers you contrive to have here! Those scarlet anemones always make me think of one I loved. I took her to Cannes for the winter, and I lost her there. One of the last things she did was to try to paint one of the anemones which grew wild there. I have got the little sketch at home. I will show it to you one day; but mind you don't ask to see it when Mrs. Parker is by; she—she can't bear to talk of Lucy—our only girl, you know, and we lost her—God's will be done!"

When Mr. Parker was gone, Heathcote turned to his mother.

"Please forgive me, mother. I have been such a bother to you this morning. I am so sorry."

"I am sorry, too, Heathcote, for we shall not have many more mornings together; but it is all past now," she said, putting her arm fondly round

Heathcote's neck. "Have you finished the translation?"

"Oh yes, mother—every word. I don't say it makes sense, but I have looked it all up, and tried to do it well, but I don't like French. I say, mother, I think they might have taken me to Exeter, and not gone off without a word."

"You would hardly have cared for a drive in a close carriage of fifteen mules. You and I will take a trip there one day soon—shall we? I want to see Mary Forster."

"But she is coming home, mother. Sam said so. I want to go to the farm and see about the lame squirrel after dinner. I do feel so sorry for that squirrel. Fancy being lame and shut up in a cage, after jumping about on the tops of trees! I wonder if Mary will be pleased with it? It must be dreadful to be lame. I may go to the farm after dinner, may I not, mother?"

"Yes, dear boy, and then in the evening we will go down to the Rectory. Mrs. Parker thinks me remiss, I am sure."

"I don't like Mrs. Parker," Heathcote said; "so grumbly and cross-patchy and"—

"Hush, Heathcote! I do not like to hear you talk like that of your elders and betters."


"Well, poor thing, I am sorry she has lost her only child, but trouble ought not to make people

cross, mother—ought it? Trouble has made *you* sweet, for instance. Penny says"—

"Penny sees only the bright side of my picture, darling. Now I have to write a letter before dinner."

CHAPTER V.

THE TUTOR.

OTHING was heard from the Grange for two days, but on the morning of the third, while Heathcote was at his lessons with his mother, the gate of the garden was swung back, and Heathcote starting up exclaimed, "It is a man and a boy—Bellfield, mother."

"Open the door, Heathcote," his mother said ; "it is Mr. More, I daresay."

"The tutor!" exclaimed Heathcote under his breath, and then in a much quieter fashion than usual he opened the dining-room door and confronted Mr. More and Bellfield in the narrow passage.

"Is Mrs. Dalton at home?" the gentleman asked, while Bellfield took Heathcote's arm and said—

"Take me to see Busy's pups, and may I have Tiny to-day?"

But Heathcote was lost in amazement at the tutor, so unlike the tutor of his imagination. Mr.

More was not tall, but he was so upright he looked tall. His hair was very dark, and though cut short, according to the fashion of the day behind, insisted in curling crisply over the broad straight brow. Dark, very dark eyebrows, eyes that were deep blue, but were so shadowed by lashes that they too looked dark. A short straight nose, and such a mouth!—there was fun lurking in every curve. Mr. More's lips seemed made to smile—a smile not at all like Sam Forster's broad grin, but an ever-changing smile, going and coming like the ripples on the lily pond when the breezes ruffled it. The tutors of Heathcote's ideas wore black clothes, very stiff and straight, but not so Mr. More. He wore a rough brownish grey suit, very thick and serviceable, but not precisely ornamental. The wide straw hat he held in his hand as he passed into the sitting-room, had a band of dark red round it, and his stout walking stick had a dog's head for the handle. All this Heathcote's sharp eyes took in as he introduced the tutor to his mother, waiting a moment while Bellfield shook hands with her; and then lingering, and still looking curiously at Mr. More, he let Bellfield drag him into the garden behind the cottage to see Busy.

"That is my pupil, I suppose?" Mr. More said; "he must be very much older than Mrs. St. Aubyn's little boy."

"No, oh no! That is the mistake every one makes. I believe Bellfield is a few weeks older than Heathcote."

"Really, he is a fine fellow indeed, a charming face and manner. Don't think I am flattering to win favour, Mrs Dalton; but I said what came uppermost. I thought," he went on, "I might venture to call on you, as the boy is to be under my care; that is, if you will commit him to me."

Mrs Dalton smiled.

"I do not feel much hesitation," she said. "I hope you will find Heathcote on the whole a pleasant pupil. I think, being so large and strong for his age, and having had so few, I may say, no companions of his own standing, and being so entirely with me, there may be difficulties."

"There are difficulties everywhere," Mr. More said, "but I don't fancy these will be insurmountable. Mrs. St. Aubyn asked me to arrange the hours with you for our work. She thinks your boy had better dine with us at the Grange, and return after a ride or a walk in the afternoon."

Mrs. Dalton hesitated.

"I cannot make up my mind to part altogether from my boy yet. I know he must some day before long go to school; but he is my only companion, and I think I should prefer his dining with me certainly two days in the week."

"Oh yes! we will try to fit it in. I do not wish to be only a book tutor to these children. They are too young, and one too delicate to be too tightly wound up; we shall only break the springs if we try to do this. So I thought we might have, certainly while the summer lasts, good long walks together; but I wish you to please yourself. I have undertaken this post for two reasons. One is, that my friend Randolph St. Aubyn has urged me to do so for his little brother's sake; the other, that I am in great need of money for one I love. I am very frank with you," he said, "but I feel tempted to be so, and you must forgive me. May I begin acquaintance with the boy by a walk this afternoon, and then we will get to our work on Monday?"

While the tutor was talking of Bellfield and Heathcote, they were talking of the tutor.

"He is awfully jolly looking," Heathcote was saying; "I think I shall like him very much."

"I don't know whether I shall," little Bellfield said; "he says, 'Wake up!' to me, and asks me if I am dreaming; and when I read to him yesterday, he shrugged his shoulders, and said 'Humph!'"

"I say!" said Heathcote, "you didn't get all your hair cut off, after all. It's not cropped."

"No; mamma said I should catch cold if it was all cut off at once."

"What did you do at Exeter?"

"Nothing; but go to the hairdresser, and to luncheon at Murch's, and to the Queen Street Station to meet Mr. More, and to see Randolph off from St. David's Station."

"Did you go down Queen Street, and did you see the horned owl in the shop there?"

"A horned owl! No; there isn't such a thing."

"Isn't there?" said Heathcote. "Oh, you must not hold Tiny like that; you'll strangle him."

"When may I have him for my own?"

"Well, let us see. On Monday week he will be a month old; you are sure you will be kind to him?"

"Yes; and I want to set up a what do you call it? A rarium for ugly creatures."

"A rarium! Aquarium, from aqua, water, you know. The creatures are beautiful, not ugly at all. I have got a water-snail since you saw them."

The children were quietly inspecting the aquarium when Mr. More and Mrs. Dalton came to find them.

"We must go back to the Grange, Bellfield," Mr. More said; "we are to have a walk or drive this afternoon with Heathcote. Now then!"

"Come back with us now," Bellfield said. "Come to dinner."

"No, I can't, thank you," said Heathcote, anticipating his mother's refusal. "I have not done my lessons yet."

"I didn't want to go, mother," Heathcote said,

when Mr. More and Bellfield were out of sight. "You know, his mother had not asked me, and I feel as if"——

Heathcote stopped.

"As if what, Heathcote?"

"Well, as if she didn't like me; perhaps because I don't feel as if I liked her."

Mrs. Dalton laughed.

"The liking or disliking of a boy of ten would not affect Mrs. St. Aubyn much," she said. "Now, have you found the place in South America?"

"No, mother; the latitude must be given wrong; it can't be"——

Mrs. Dalton bent over the atlas and said—

"Every one *must* be wrong except Heathcote Dalton," as she pointed to the place with her pencil.

Heathcote was silent, and went on with his geography lesson. Presently he said—

"I like Mr. More, mother; don't you? Only"—(his mother was surprised by the sudden and passionate flinging of the boy's arms round her neck)—"only I don't want to leave you, even for a day."

It was so much the echo of the cry of her own heart that Mrs. Dalton could not trust herself to speak, but she returned the embrace lovingly, and mother and son understood each other.

When the shadows of the rugged tors were cast

upon the daisied turf which sloped up to their feet, and the sun, sinking in the west, threw a golden glory over the whole country-side, Mr. More lay stretched out on the grass, his wide hat tilted over his eyes and his hands folded at the back of his head.

"When the gorse goes the heather comes," Heathcote was saying, "and it never looks alike; and then the harebells, they are just coming out, and they are always mother's favourite flowers. I hate to see flowers gathered and thrown down like this," Heathcote said, picking up some of the lovely harebells Bello had picked and then dropped. "I always feel as if flowers lived."

"Your mother taught you that, I suppose?" Mr. More said.

Heathcote reddened and said bluntly—

"She taught me everything. But, I say, what noise is that?" He sprang to his feet and listened.

"I hear nothing," Mr. More said. "Your ears are sharper than mine."

Heathcote did not speak, but stood with parted lips and earnest searching gaze in the attitude of strained attention.

"It is somebody crying," he said. "Somebody is hurt—is in distress."

Mr. More sat upright, and, looking round, exclaimed—

"Where is Bellfield? A nice tutor I am if I can't keep my eyes on a boy, and lose him before the first week is out."

A huge mass of rock rose behind the place where Mr. More and Heathcote were sitting, and in front lay the sloping turf and large boulders of rock, lichen covered; then a bed of shale or loose stones, which ended in more grass, and then came fields and orchards and the village.

Before Mr. More could say any more Heathcote had disappeared, and he heard his loud ringing voice calling Bellfield by name.

Mr. More, swift of foot as he was, could not keep up with Heathcote, who had leaped and jumped over masses of rock like a young deer, and was soon out of sight amongst the big grey boulders.

"Yes," Mr. More thought, "there is some one crying. I expect it is that child."

Presently a call from Heathcote directed him to a place known as the Elf's Stairs, and here he found Heathcote bending over Bellfield, and telling him not to make a fuss, it would be all right directly.

"He has got his foot stuck in a crack in the stone, and he is so frightened. Come, now, don't be a baby, Bellfield; if you are quiet I'll get your boot off," and Heathcote was tugging till he was almost black in the face, to unfasten the lace of Bellfield's boot. No easy matter, for the little dainty boot had stuck

so fast in the crevice that it was almost impossible to get at the lace.

Mr. More produced a strong knife and cut the difficulty. Then Heathcote went behind and lifted Bellfield while Mr. More carefully held the boot, and thus the little tender foot was liberated.

Bellfield gave a great sigh of relief, and Heathcote said—

“You are not hurt, you see. Why did you make such a fuss, and what did you come off here alone for?”

“I thought I should never get my foot out of that dreadful hole,” Bellfield said tremulously. “I wanted to see the Elf’s Stairs, where Mary Forster broke her back. The woman at the farm told me all about it.”

“So you thought you would come and break your back in the same place—was that it?” Mr. More asked in the dry way Bellfield never felt sure about. “Well, it is a happy thing you did not break your ankle. Now, sit down and take off your stocking, and let us see whether your foot is bruised.”

Bellfield pulled off his blue stocking and displayed a white leg and foot. There were several bruises, which showed there had been some cause for his cries.

Mr. More examined the delicate little foot with the eye of a practised surgeon, and said—



"And so they turned homewards."—Page 53.

"This must be bandaged. Here, Heathcote, take my handkerchief and dip it in the first water you come to, and then we will soon bind up the foot and bring out the bruise."

Heathcote was off in an instant, saying—

"There is a little pool a quarter of a mile down; I'll be as quick as I can."

And Mr. More and Bellfield could hardly believe the speed with which Heathcote went and came on his errand.

Bellfield bore the bandaging very fairly, and then, at Mr. More's order, Heathcote helped the child on his back, and so they turned homewards.

Once Mr. More stopped to rest, and then looking at Heathcote said—

"I have found names for you two boys, capital names—

HEATHER AND HAREBELL."

So this is how Heathcote and Bellfield came by the names by which they are known in this story.

I hope you like the names as well as Mr. More did, for as he walked onwards with the light figure of little Bellfield on his back and Heathcote tramping sedately by his side, he repeated several times with a low laugh—

"Heather and Harebell! Heather and Harebell! Could any names suit them better?"

CHAPTER VI.

DOCTORS AND REMEDIES.



ALL Bellfield's heroism seemed to vanish at the sight of his mother, who was just driving up to the door in the pony carriage when the party from the moor arrived.

"What is it? is he hurt? Morris! Elsie!" she cried; and Bellfield, hearing his mother's alarmed voice, began to make fresh lamentations.

"He is not really hurt; he has only bruised his foot a little," Mr. More said, resigning his burden to Morris, who took Bellfield from the broad back which had borne him so easily, and carried him into the house.

"Drive to Chagford instantly for Mr. Bayliss," Mrs. St. Aubyn said to the groom. "Turn the ponies' heads at once—do you hear?—and bring Mr. Bayliss back."

"Really," Mr. More began, "I don't think it is at all necessary to have a doctor to the boy's foot. It is only a bruise, and as I have carried him home"——

"I beg your pardon, Mr. More, but I am the best judge of that. My darling, how did it happen? Great carelessness, I fear, or rough play. Really, Heathcote Dalton," Mrs. St. Aubyn said angrily, "you must remember my boy has not been accustomed to the companionship of farmers' sons and"—

"It is nobody's fault, mamma," Bellfield said in a sobbing tone. "I went to look at the Elf's Stairs, and I hitched my foot in a crack and"—

Mr. More was glad to hear Bellfield speak out honourably, and said—

"That is right, my boy; make the best of it, and bear the pain bravely." Then he turned to Elsie, and saying, "A pad of cold water will soon relieve the pain," he put his hand on Heathcote's shoulder and tried to draw him away.

Heathcote was very angry at Mrs. St. Aubyn's implying he had anything to do with Bellfield's accident, and Mr. More saw the flush on his face and the proud curve of his lips, as he tried to twist himself from his friendly grasp.

"Come with me, Heathcote. I have been settling my room, and you will like to look at some of my curiosities. Where are you going?" as Heathcote still tried to free himself.

"Home," he said sulkily; "I shan't stay here."

"Nonsense! Don't be so thin-skinned and take

offence in a minute. That, is not the way to get through life. How would you get on at school?"

"That would be different," said Heathcote. "If I must leave mother, I would sooner go to school. Farmers' boys indeed!" Heathcote repeated.

Mr. More laughed; he had such a pleasant low laugh!

"Oh, I see! That is it—pride! Well, we won't talk any more about it now. This way!"

Heathcote found farther resistance impossible, and when he got to Mr. More's room, he forgot his injured feelings, for on a table stood a large and beautiful microscope—the very thing he had longed to see; and Mr. More made him look in at once to see the gauze-like fabric of a bee's wing, which he had put on a slide that morning.

"It is like lace; lovely lace! and oh, what thousands of lines and threads! I should like to bring you one of my blue moths to put in. May I?"

"One of the moths would be too big, but we will have an eye, if you like. I shall be glad of any contribution. Now, look here; this is a leg of a common house-fly."

So they went on from wonder to wonder, and Heathcote had forgotten all about the "farmers' boys," and was his own bright self again.

"Who is that?" he asked, going up to the chimney-piece. "Why, you have three pictures of her."

"My only sister," was the reply, "and my dearest friend."

"She is awfully pretty," Heathcote said.

"And she is awfully good. She has a bad cough, and I want to get her to the South of France for next winter, and so I have come here to get the money."

"For teaching us?" Heathcote asked much interested.

"Yes, for teaching Bellfield and you. Mrs. St. Aubyn is to pay me, and I shall have to do my best to earn the money honestly, do you see?"

"Honestly?" Heathcote asked.

"Yes, honestly. If I do not try heart and soul to do you two little boys—I beg your pardon, one big boy and one little one—all the good I can, I shall be taking money dishonestly, so I must do my best."

Heathcote was silent for a minute, then he said—

"Do you know, I made up my mind to run off home to mother, and say I would never come here any more, because I hated it. Now I am glad I didn't. It would have vexed mother; and besides, I should like to do my work with you. Only, isn't Bellfield a baby, and his mother stupid, and"—

"Now shut up, my boy; no good can come of setting ourselves up as better than other people. Let

us do our part, and see if that will not answer better than grumbling because other people don't do theirs. I don't know how you feel, but I am very hungry and want my tea. Let us go and see how the land lies in the library. Bellfield and I settled that we were to have our tea there after our walk; it must be ready now."

"Tell me your sister's name first."

"Maude," Mr. More said.

"Maude More," Heathcote repeated; "somehow that does not fit well."

Mr. More laughed.

"No; and it has not got to fit, you see, for Maude's name is Egerton. She is to me what Bellfield's brother is to him."

"But Bellfield's name is St. Aubyn, and so is his brother's. I don't see how it can be."

"Well, my mother was Mrs. Egerton before she married my father, and Maude was her daughter."

"Oh, I see now! Your mother had two husbands and Mr. St. Aubyn had two wives."

Mr. More laughed.

"I am glad you have solved the genealogical problem to your satisfaction," he said.

"The what problem? That is a hard word."

"Don't you know tutors are made up of hard words, which they have to knock into their pupil's heads with hard knocks? But come to tea now."

Mr. More and Heathcote had scarcely seated themselves at the table, when Mrs. St. Aubyn came in, Bellfield carried by Morris, and Elsie bringing up the rear with cushions and wraps enough for a regiment of wounded men.

"He *would* come down stairs," said Mrs. St. Aubyn, "and perhaps it might make him feverish to contradict him. Pray be careful, Morris, how you put him down on the couch. I don't know whether you know it, but sprains, Mr. More, and bruises, are often far more difficult to cure than broken limbs. I shall feel no security till Mr. Bayliss has seen the leg. I expect the child will be ordered to bed, and that he will be kept there for a month. Most provoking, and all from pure carelessness! Really, one has enough anxieties without unnecessary ones like this. That air cushion is not half filled, Elsie."

"Well, ma'am," said Elsie, "I have blowed myself quite faint; and as to Mr. Morris, he coughs dreadful if he puffs at it."

"Give it to me," said Heathcote; "I'll blow it up in a minute;" and seizing the air-cushion in his vigorous hands, he blew with all his might, his rosy cheeks puffed out, his whole attitude like one of those fat boy-cherubs which people used to be so fond of setting up in white marble on old monuments.

Bellfield laughed heartily and forgot his leg for the time, while Mrs. St. Aubyn said—

“Thank you, my dear. What a little Hercules you are!”

“I call them Heather and Harebell,” Mr. More said. “I think no names could suit them better.”

“Heather and Harebell! how poetical! I expect, Mr. More, we shall find you are a poet,” Mrs. St. Aubyn said.

Tea was just over, when Morris reappeared to say Mr. Bayliss had arrived. James had met him on the way, and he had driven him back in the pony carriage.

Now Mrs. St. Aubyn had so long been accustomed to the soft polite manners of London doctors, that Mr. Bayliss's abrupt entrance behind Morris quite astonished her. She had never seen Mr. Bayliss. Randolph had given her his name in case of need, as the best doctor in the district; but she was nearly speechless with surprise when a tall man in a rough overcoat, with a red weather-beaten face surmounted by grizzly hair, walked up to the sofa where Bellfield lay, with long strides.

“I met your groom, madam, in search of me. Well, what is amiss? A broken leg, eh?”

“No, it was a wrench, by catching the dear little foot in the crack of some terrible rock.”

“I am afraid I am disturbing your meal,” Mr.

Bayliss said, smiling pleasantly at Mr. More and Heathcote. Then, without seeming to take much heed of Mrs. St. Aubyn's history of the accident, he said to Elsie—

“Uncover the leg. A wet bandage! a very suitable thing. Oh, I see; a bruise!” Then he took the little fair leg and foot in his large hands, with a kindly tender touch, felt it in every part, bent it this way and that, regardless of Mrs. St. Aubyn's—

“Oh, pray take care, pray be gentle! O Mr. Bayliss!”

“A bruise just above the ankle; no sprain that I can see. Painful, I daresay, especially when your leg was in the trap and you could not move it. Ah! well, keep quiet, with the bandages on, just as you are now, till Monday, then I'll look in again. I have not a moment to lose now, for I am called to a poor man who has broken his back, and I shall scarcely find him alive. He has a wife and five children, poor fellow; fell off a scaffolding at Mr. Lewis's new house. Keep quiet till Monday, remember;” and then, with a bow and a smile, Mr. Bayliss was gone.

“What a doctor!” exclaimed Mrs. St. Aubyn. “A rough bear; he can't be properly qualified.”


“I like him,” Bellfield said; “he has got a kind face, and such a nice voice.”

“Well, we may be thankful it is nothing more

serious," Mr. More said; "and now we must do our best to amuse Bellfield till he can run about again. It has not spoiled your appetite for Devonshire cream, I am glad to see," he added, laughing. "It's a comfort to me to find some one cares for this cream as much as I do."

CHAPTER VII.

HOME TO THE FARM.

T was on this same bright May afternoon that Farmer Forster was driving his spring cart to Lustleigh to meet the train from Exeter.

His face was grave and stern, and one would have said that he left all the laughing to his son Sam, who, with the broad grin displaying his row of white teeth, jerked out a remark to his father every now and then, by way of showing he was seated by his side on the stout bench which went across the covered cart, and would hold three people abreast easily.

"The train is mostly late; I daresay we shall have to wait a bit. If Lassie gets fidgety I can drive her up and down."

"I'll do that for myself," was all Farmer Forster replied, and for another minute there was silence.

"The gentry at the Grange are going to put on Bob Curtis in the garden, father."

"What do you mean naming a Curtis to me, a

bad lot like them? Better hold your tongue than talk to no purpose."

Sam was the very essence of good nature, and instead of being affronted by his father's remark, said, after a pause—

"I hope little Mary won't be jolted and jogged too much in the cart, but Mrs. Farleigh is a good weight, and she'll keep the bottom steady."

There was no reply to this, but a deep sigh, and Sam knew what that sigh meant. Sam knew, as all the village knew, that since little Mary had been found by the shepherd lying at the foot of the Elf's Stairs, his father had been a changed man. Trouble sweetens those who take it from the hand of a Father who *loves* us while He chastens, but it often sours and embitters those who resent the discipline, and are angry that it should be sent them.

Little Mary Forster had gone out on the moor to gather whortleberries with some other children in the August of the year before my story began. These children were the Curtises, of whom Patty, who had trimmed Penelope's bonnet so much to her satisfaction, was the eldest. They were a large, unruly family. Their father had died when they were all young, and their mother, who took in washing, was a feeble woman, who certainly did not look after her children, and did not mend matters by marrying a man who kept a public-house in Canaton, and who spent his wife's

savings, and led an idle life, such as the keepers of public-houses generally do lead. The Curtises' cottage adjoined the "Three Stars," and here Patty made dresses and trimmed bonnets, while the other sisters helped, or were supposed to help, their mother in the laundry, but I am afraid were too fond of running about and amusing themselves.

Little Mary Forster had been to the Sunday-school with the two youngest of the Curtises, and so a sort of friendship had grown up between them. But it was not a friendship Mrs. Forster had liked, and this whortleberry expedition had been against her wishes. She was busy in the dairy when her little Mary came dancing in to ask permission, and she gave it, as she said afterwards, in a half-hearted way, for she never liked "those Curtises."

What happened at the Elf's Stairs no one really knew. Certain it is there had been some dispute about the whortleberries, and some hard words. The Curtises, three girls of nine, eleven, and thirteen, had all gone home, and left poor Mary in a sitting position at the foot of the irregular steps from the high tor called the Elf's or Fairies' Staircase. The Giant's Stairs would have been more appropriate, but probably those who called it by this name did so in compliment to the rings in the turf below; those dark rings which are known in every district in England as fairies' rings, within which the "little people" danced at

night when big people were asleep. Farmer Forster's shepherd, passing this way towards sunset, saw something white leaning against the rock, and found, to his surprise, it was his master's little daughter. He raised her in his arms, and she told him she had fallen down and hurt her back. She was crying bitterly, and her frock and pinafore were stained with crushed whortleberries, and her hands dyed with the juice.

"They said I could get up and walk if I chose, but I could not," she had said to the shepherd, but not a word more as to how she had fallen ever passed her lips. A little girl who had been of the party had run home to her mother, and said Ellen Curtis had quarrelled with Mary Forster and pushed her down the rock, and it was all because Mary Forster wanted to take her berries to her mother, and not eat them all, or give them to the Curtises.

Farmer Forster strode down to the Curtises' house the next day, and said he wanted to know how they dared to leave his little one on the moor, where she might have died for all they cared. Hard words were exchanged between Mrs. Radford and Mary's father, and Radford made a joke of the whole matter, and said the girls knew nothing about it, and folks who set themselves up often did catch a fall. People who were too good to take a glass of beer at the "Three Stars," he meant.

So the wound was made, and seemed unlikely to heal. Little Mary's hip and back grew worse rather than better, and she was taken to the hospital at Exeter; and having been first an indoor and then an outdoor patient, her parents were told that her case was incurable; that country air and her mother's care in her own sweet home might strengthen her, and restore her to some measure of health, but that in all probability she would never walk about like other children again.

Thus it was with a heavy heart that Farmer Forster drove to Farleigh to meet his child that bright afternoon. What we see we believe; to hear of the illness of those we love—of their pain and of their helplessness—is one thing; but to see it and watch it for ourselves is another. Poor Mr. Forster had all along been trusting to the hope of his child's recovery. He was ready to believe the doctors were wrong, and that she would soon be skipping about like the lambs again. He had been afraid to confess how his hope was resting on the sand, and though he had returned from Exeter every market-day less and less confident, he had hidden his feelings from his wife, from Sam, from Mrs. Dalton, from the old clergyman.

He seemed to have room for only one idea—resentment against the girl who had caused his child's accident—deep seated and bitter.

Now as the cart drew up to the station, he pulled in old Lassie with an irritable twitch of the rein, and said to Sam—

“What are you about? There’s the train coming up.”

“Shall I get out, father?”

“Yes, and make haste about it, you stupid.”

Sam jumped out, and came down upon the dusty road with a hard thud that made Lassie prick up her ears. Sam lurched off to the platform, and the train came gliding up.

Presently a sweet happy voice was heard. “Sam! Sam! here we are!” And a pair of little arms were the next moment clinging round Sam’s neck as he lifted Mary out of the carriage, while behind came good Mrs. Farleigh with Mary’s crutches, and innumerable parcels tied up in a newspaper, panting and puffing, and holding the tickets between her teeth.

“That’s a new way of keeping your tickets, missus,” said the man at the gate, who took them from their place at a jerk of the head from Mrs. Farleigh.

“You’ll be swallowing ’em one of these days, and choking yourself.”

Mrs. Farleigh’s tongue was now set free, and she began a long harangue on impudence and young men minding their own business, when a merry

ringing laugh was heard from Mary, who was behind in Sam's arms.

"Mrs. Farleigh, Mrs. Farleigh! look! look! One of the parcels is cracked, and there's all the things coming out. Oh, there go your stockings and your ball of worsted, and two lemons and"—

"Instead of grinning like a Cheshire cat, Sam Forster, you might be picking 'em up. You never do nothing but grin," said Mrs. Farleigh.

"Well, as my hands is full, I can't stoop, you see," said Sam, as the much-amused recipient of the tickets chased the fallen property about on the platform, and good-naturedly took it to the cart, where all this time Mr. Forster was waiting.

"Catch me going a journey again without a basket. It was all my sister-in-law's fault. She said there was no call to bring more than I could help. However am I to get up that cart, such high steps! Here, Mr. Forster, do give me a hand."

But Mr. Forster was gazing at his child with surprise. She was laughing as merrily as he had ever heard her, and was nodding her head to her father, saying—

"I am so glad to be home, father—it is nice."

With desperate upheaval from below, and hauling from above, Mrs. Farleigh was at last brought to her place on the broad bench by Farmer Forster's side, and then Sam lifted Mary into the back of the

cart, where a nice soft seat was all ready for her of pillows and rugs, that she might not be jolted, and Sam was proud and pleased when his little sister said—

“This is a beautiful seat, and such a grand rug!”

“Are you comfortable, my dear?” asked the farmer, looking back at his darling.

“Oh yes, father! but you haven’t kissed me yet.”

Mr. Forster leaned down, and as Mary clasped him round the neck, she whispered something in his ear, which he only heard.

“Don’t look sad, father; *I* am very happy.”

Then Sam climbed to his place by Mr. Forster’s side, and Lassie at the word of command began her journey homewards.

The child’s eyes sought out all the familiar places as they went along through those lovely lanes, with their high hedges and their countless flowers; then on over the moor road, where the streams trickled, and the Mary-buds on the edge of the little brown pools were shining like gold; then through the village, and past the church, and up by the common where the geese were cackling, and a brood of little golden goslings were close behind their mothers, like a number of small cowslip balls; and here Lassie was pulled up short as a young voice called out—

“Stop, Mr. Forster!”

It was Heathcote on his way home from the Grange.


"I thought it was May. Well, May, how are you? Sam has got a present for you—a squirrel. Sam, have you told her? I say, we have been to the Elf's Stairs this afternoon, and Bellfield gave his foot a bruise between the rocks, and there has been such a fuss. Well, May, I am so glad you have come back. Mother will come and see you to-morrow."

"O Master Heathcote! do tell Mrs. Dalton to be sure to come."

And then with a grave, "I wish you good evening, sir," from Mr. Forster, the cart was off again.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOUBLE LINES.

EATHCOTE rushed into the cottage full of his news.

“Mary Forster is come home to the farm, mother—I met the cart; and Bellfield got his foot hitched between two stones, and there has been a great fuss. You might think he had broken his back, like poor little Mary. But, mother, Mr. More is awfully jolly. I never saw any man I like so much—he knows everything. I am sure he must be related to that man I was reading about, Sir Thomas More, whose head was cut off by old Henry the Eighth.”

“Heathcote, you quite take away my breath,” his mother said; “do speak more quietly. What do you say about little Bellfield?”

“Harebell, mother; that is his name from this day. Mr. More gave it him, and he calls me Heather. Isn't that like Sir Thomas More; he was always playing upon words—joking, you know.”

"I hope Bellfield's foot is not much hurt; you don't tell me that."

"Oh, well, it is bruised; but what's a bruise? Look here!" and Heather pushed down his stocking and displayed a leg which certainly displayed all the colours of the rainbow—orange, blue, and red.

"My dear child, what an exhibition! but really you should be more careful."

"Oh, it's nothing, mother. I don't care for a few knocks; I am not such a baby. We are to begin our work on Monday, mother; and I am to be at the Grange by nine o'clock. I say, mother, May Foster does not look ill or unhappy. She was as brisk as a bee. Oh, isn't it wonderful that any one shouldn't mind being lame? Why, that is just the thing I could not bear; I would sooner be dead."

"Hush, oh hush, Heathcote! I cannot bear to hear you talk so lightly of death."

"Well, mother, I only mean I can't understand May Forster looking so happy, poor little thing! Can you?"

"Yes, Heathcote; and when you have lived as long in the world as I have, you will find out that the happy children and the happy men and women are not always those who appear to have everything to make them so. Happy people carry about with them their own secret of happiness, quite apart from outward things."

"Like you, mother!" Heathcote said. "You never look miserable, even when you have one of your bad headaches, or a cough in the winter which keeps you indoors for weeks. Mr. More has a sister called Maude who is never well, and he has come here to get money enough to send her to the South of France, where it is always warm in the winter as well as in the summer. If you have that cough all next winter, mother, you will have to go. When I am a man I will save up all my money to take you there, but I wish that time were not so far off; don't you, mother?" he said, as he ran off to call Pene-lope to come to prayers.

The lessons with Mr. More began on the following Monday, and Mrs. St. Aubyn was surprised to find how eager Bellfield was that his bruised leg should not interfere with this. The child was really delighted to be taught by an intelligent tutor like Mr. More, and though his foot kept him imprisoned to the sofa for a week, his eyes were bright with interest, and his pretty fair face often kindled with animation. He showed a determination to master difficulties which surprised Mr. More, and becoming conscious of how far behind he was to boys of his own age, he set himself to learn with real earnestness and goodwill.

The quickness and ease with which Heathcote got through his work surprised Bellfield. He began to

look on him as his superior to him in everything—as in health and strength, so in wisdom and learning; and this would have been very bad for Heathcote if his tutor had not known how to deal with it. There was, as you will have seen, an inclination in Heathcote to think highly of himself, and it was happy for him that he had such a wise, good mother, who, though she loved him, and could not be blind to the nobleness of her boy's character, was not blind either to the faults which might have grown as weeds in a garden unchecked, and spoiled the fair flowers and fruit which flourished there.

Days and weeks went rapidly on. They were not always bright and sunny. The lovely May, when the orchards were dressed in pink and white, and the flowers were all around, was succeeded by a wet and cold June, when heavy rains came down in sudden showers; and the sky was dark and leaden, and the higher tops were enveloped in clouds.

Weather was never heeded by Heathcote. Buttoned up to the chin in his stout Ulster, with black leggings to meet his knickerbockers, he would run off to the Grange with his book-satchel on his back, and, in answer to old Morris's inquiries, would say, "Oh! it's only a shower. I am not wet."

"Little moor pony," Mrs. St. Aubyn used to call him; and one of Heathcote's greatest trials at the Grange was when Mrs. St. Aubyn would tell some

guest who happened to be at luncheon of his "extraordinary hardy nature," and say he was born to rough it in the backwoods of Australia!

Under Mr. More's eye, the "shamming" and want of honesty, which were poor little Bellfield's besetting sins, lessened. When he learned that Mr. More could detect his little evasions, he became ashamed of them, and in the schoolroom he was seldom guilty of a subterfuge. But faults and failings are not cured in a moment. Children do not suddenly change, and turning over a new leaf, as it is called, write none of the old faults on the fresh page. Bellfield never forgot his first sharp lesson in honour, and I think it was the beginning of the strong friendship which bound him to Heathcote from that time.

Both the boys were learning French. Heathcote had gone through the easy little book called "Hall's French Course" with his mother, and Bellfield was only beginning the first book.

"They are stupid baby exercises, those first hundred," Heathcote said. "I did them ever so long ago. I have got two books full of them. Why, I began them when I wrote in double lines."

"I have some thoughts of putting you into double lines again," Mr. More said in his dry way. "That exercise you brought yesterday is shockingly written. Bellfield beats you in writing."

Heathcote bit his lip.

"He writes so slow, and if I wrote no quicker I should never get through my work."

"Humph! I am afraid then you will have to try, for I shall refuse to take exercises written in that slipshod way. Bring your double-line book to-morrow, that I may compare the past with the present."

The next morning Heathcote brought the two thick exercise books, and Mr. More examined them, saying, with a laugh—

"The double lines are a decided success. How is it you have got into such a bad habit of writing? These exercises are a credit to you and to your mother," he said, as he turned over the pages. "And you were only seven or eight when you wrote them! Write me a double lined exercise to-morrow. There! your fate is sealed."

"Must I really?" Heathcote asked.

"Yes, really. If it were *unreally*, I should not have said anything about it."

Then the work of the morning began. The two old exercise books were put away with some others, and forgotten.

One afternoon Bellfield was doing his preparation alone. Heathcote was at home and Mr. More out. He came to a difficult sentence in Hall's exercises, or rather a sentence which was difficult for him to write. He was in doubt about *ceux ci*

and *celles ci*, and he could not find the noun in the vocabulary to which these referred, and could not say if that noun was masculine or feminine.

Suddenly there came into Bellfield's mind the thought of Heathcote's corrected exercise books.

"I will just look if *crayon* is feminine," he said to himself.

This was the beginning of many peeps into Heathcote's old books, and Bellfield got many words of commendation from Mr. More for correct exercises which were wholly undeserved.

"There!" Mr. More said one morning, "you may take that exercise to your mother, and tell her I sent you to show how you are getting on with your French."

Bellfield's fair face flushed very red and then grew pale again. He stood irresolute, for Heathcote's eyes were upon him, and Bellfield felt sure he had suspected him.

"Well," Mr. More said, "don't stand and dream for half an hour before you move. Run off."

The child moved slowly to the door, as if unwilling to obey Mr. More.

"He has worked to some purpose," Mr. More said, as the door feebly closed behind Bellfield. "Looking back to his extraordinary ignorance two months ago, his progress is as extraordinary."

Heathcote was still silent, and drummed his feet on the floor—the old habit which Penelope was

always ready to notice and reprove—and he accompanied the tattoo with a low hum.

“Stop that noise, Heathcote,” Mr. More said. “It does not help me through the tangle of this sum of yours, which you have done precisely in the wrongest way possible.” Mr. More’s quick glance at Heathcote was met by what he thought a defiant one.

“You are surely not jealous of the praise that poor child may win. I thought I saw something of the sort about the writing the other day. It is beneath you, Heathcote. Fight against anything so mean and unmanly.”

Heathcote’s chest heaved, and he had great difficulty in keeping back his tears.

“Unjust!” he murmured, almost in a whisper. But Mr. More’s ears were sharp.

“That won’t answer with me, Heathcote. Don’t try it on. Here, you may take this sum, work it all again, and add another to it.”

At this moment Bellfield came back, and putting the book before Mr. More, said, in a low voice—

“Mother is coming to speak to you directly.”

Accordingly in came Mrs. St. Aubyn, full of praise and pleasure.

“The exercise is wonderful, not a single mistake, and so beautifully written. May I ask for a whole holiday to-morrow for the boys as a reward?”

Mr. More had been obliged to set his face against

whole holidays, for Mrs. St. Aubyn at first had asked for so many. But the glowing September sunshine was as tempting to the tutor as to the boys, and he said he thought it would be a good plan. He wanted to go into Exeter, and the boys could have a day to themselves without his society, which would be a pleasant variety!

"Oh yes, mother," exclaimed Bellfield; "let Heathcote and me go to Lustleigh Cleeve, and take Snowball, and our dinner in a basket hung over his back, like real travellers."

"Oh, not alone, my darling! Remember your foot, and think what it would have been if you two children had been by yourselves."

"Oh, but that is ever so long ago. We are both ten years older since then. Aren't we, Heather? Don't let us have Morris poking after us, or, worse still, Elsie."

"Well, well," said Mrs. St. Aubyn, "we will see to-morrow. It may be a wet day, and a thousand things may happen. Anyhow, I hope Mrs. Dalton will allow you, Heathcote, to come here to-morrow and spend the whole day as pleasantly as we can contrive to spend it; and do tell her I call it Harebell's French holiday. For it is a reward for him for his beautiful exercise."

Mr. More began to repent having said anything about the French at all, for it had brought a cloud

over Heathcote, and had, perhaps, unduly elated little Bellfield; but it was too late to draw back, and he must make the best of it.

Heathcote finished his sums after dinner, and put them on Mr. More's desk without a word. His little heart was swelling with a sense of injustice, and yet he knew Mr. More was not to blame. That Bellfield had for some weeks past helped himself to his French corrections in the old exercise-books, he knew. He knew it by certain and unmistakable signs, as well as by the extraordinary correctness of Bellfield's exercises since the day when the writing on double lines had first been mentioned. The unmistakable signs were that he had found one of the exercise-books on Bellfield's shelf, and that on carelessly opening it and turning the leaves, he came upon a little pencil drawing of Bellfield's of a man with a very big head, and very thin legs, and a pipe in his mouth—the sort of high art for which Bellfield was famous. This seemed to Heathcote conclusive evidence, and yet something held him back from taxing the child with dishonesty, for Heathcote's cheeks burned with shame and indignation at the very idea of such cheating. He would as soon have thought of stealing a shilling as stealing another boy's work and passing it off for his own.

"It is shameful! it is mean! it is horrid!" Heathcote said to himself, as he stuffed the old exercise

books into his satchel, and said, "At any rate, he shall not do it again. I will tell mother. I know what she will say. She will never like Bellfield again. She will go straight off to Mr. More. Yes, I will tell mother."

But as Heathcote ran home he changed his mind.

"It will only make mischief," he said. "I don't think I will say anything. I'll wait for a day or two, and see how he gets on the next French day. But Mr. More is very unjust; he does not like me. I believe he likes Bellfield best."

When Heathcote reached the cottage, he found his mother was out.

"Where is she?" he asked of Penny.

"She's up to the farm, I fancy. She has been getting some work ready for that poor child—some *cruel* work you call it, don't you? Such a name, to be sure! There's cruel work enough without making more in the world. Have you heard of that poor Bob Curtis being sent off from the Grange all of a heap for stealing a few roots? They weren't worth tuppence ha'penny. It is all spite. The spite against them Curtises is something dreadful in the village. However, I think your mamma is going to take this up, I do indeed. To go and take a boy's character away for a few roots!"

"Well," said Heathcote, "I don't know that it


matters whether it's one root or fifty; it's stealing all the same." ,

"Oh, well, I am not holding up stealing, Master Heathcote. You needn't speak so sharp, and as if you knew everything better than the rest of the world. What I do say is the Curtis family haven't a chance in Canaton, and all because of poor little Mary Forster, as nice a child as ever lived, and the last to say a bad word of any one."

"Here, Busy, Busy!" Heathcote called; "come along and meet mother." And Busy came, wriggling and panting and showing her delight in a thousand insane antics, till at last the little garden gate was opened, and she rushed out to chase an imaginary cat into the hedge, barking furiously, with the rapture of an escaped prisoner.

CHAPTER IX.

BOB'S RESOLVE

RS. DALTON was a frequent visitor at the farm. Her heart went out in tender sympathy to the little lame girl who sat patiently and uncomplaining by the window of the large roomy kitchen, or in the porch before the door, working or reading, and with a smile for all passers-by.

"It just does one good to look at her," the village people said; "dear lamb! and all through those wild Curtis lot; she is lamed for life."

Indeed it was as Penelope said, Canaton was hard on the Curtises. They had few if any friends in the village, and Patty's skill as a dressmaker was so little appreciated that she thought of going to live at Chudleigh with an aunt, and beginning afresh there.

Little Mary Forster, from her corner in the deep window-seat, would often hear histories of the Curtises' misdoings, when people came up to the

farm for butter or eggs, or a loaf of Mrs. Forster's beautiful home-made bread.

Bob's dismissal from the Grange was now the topic of village gossip.

"Just like them all," Mrs. Forster said; "there's not one who will ever earn their bread."

"A good-for-nothing lot, that's what the Curtises are, and I am sure you, Mrs. Forster, have good reason to say so."

"Well, I let bygones be bygones," Mrs. Forster rejoined; "and if my child can be so happy and forgiving, *we* ought to be."

When the neighbour was gone, Mary called her mother.

"Mother, what is this story about Bob Curtis?"

"He has been thieving roots, my dear, up at the Grange, and Mr. MacAndrew, the gardener, has sent him about his business, with no character."

"Perhaps it is not true," Mary said; "perhaps Bob did not take the roots."

"Ah! my dear, you are always ready with your perhapses, when it's about evil of any one," her mother replied. "I wish there was more like you, that I do."

Mary looked up at her mother with a bright smile, and her frequent exclamation of—

"I'm very happy, mother, and I want every one to be happy."

When Mrs. Forster had gone back to the dairy

and her work there, Mary moved gently from the window to the porch, where Jack, the tame squirrel, was in his cage, that she might look down the road, and perhaps be gladdened by the sight of Mrs. Dalton coming up from the village, or of Heathcote passing the corner from the Grange, whistling or singing as he went, with his books slung over his shoulder in his satchel.

It was a lovely afternoon, and everything looked golden and bright. Little Mary thought how she would like to run off, as she used to run, and sit amongst the heather and make grass brushes. Sam had brought her a lot of long grass a few days before, that she might make one at home, but somehow it was not the same thing — not half so nice as to choose the grasses for one's self, and put the longest and thickest heads in the middle, and the dear little "quaking grass" round, and then some stout "soldiers," with their stiff brown heads and tough straight stalks, outside, to keep all firm.

But Mary did not indulge in discontented longings for many minutes. "There's Jack," she said, "how happy he is, though it must be dull to be in a cage hanging on that little ring, instead of up upon the fir-tree tops." And at this point Mary turned her head at the sound of footsteps, and saw a pair of dark eyes looking at her over the little side gate which led to the orchard.

"Come in, Bob Curtis," she said; "come in and look at Jack, if you like."

But Bob did not come. "I'll tell you all about Jack, if you come in."

"I am afraid," Bob said, "Farmer Forster would kick me out and thrash me, if he caught a sight of me."

"Oh no, he wouldn't. At least I think not, for he knows it would vex me. Come in, Bob."

Very slowly Bob opened the gate and let himself in, an inch at a time. Then as slowly, he crept up to Mary's side, and looked with curious interest at Jack.

"One day," said Mary, "just before I came home you know, Master Heathcote and Sam found Jack; he was quite a baby then, and he had fallen from the top of the tree where his father and mother lived, and broke his leg. At least so Sam thinks, but I think he was trying to take too wide a jump, and missed, you know. Isn't he listening to all I say?" Mary exclaimed. "Look at his bright eye, and how quick he is! Well, Mrs. Penny, at the cottage, tied up Jack's leg, and though she did not mean it, of course, she tied it up, so that it will always be crooked and it is a good piece shorter than it ought to be, so he must live in the cage all his life. He comes out for a walk sometimes, and Sam made him that ring of wire, and tied it up to the roof of the porch, and

he lets him climb about there, when he is by. But it is dull for Jack—it must be dull.”

Bob was so absorbed with the history of the lame squirrel, and attracted by Mary's gentle voice as she told it, that he forgot everything else—his dismissal from the Grange and all his troubles. But Mary did not forget them; she wanted to ask him about them, and yet scarcely knew how to begin.

“You must come and see me again,” she said at last, as Bob began to move off. “Come often, if you like.”

“I'm afraid,” Bob said; “besides, you hate all our lot, and no wonder; I'm going to run away, I am.”

Bob's breast heaved, and Mary put out her hand as if to stop him.

“Oh no, Bob, don't run away. Where would you go to?”

“To sea and get drowned; that's the best thing for me. Every one says we are a bad lot, and so I'll save 'em the trouble of saying it about me. They say my sisters broke your back, and ”——

“Well, never mind; that's all past,” the child said, shrinking as if touched in a sore place. “But, Bob, *please* tell me, did you steal the tulip and hyacinth roots from the Grange, and did you sell them to Mr. Bloss down at Chagford, and say Mr. MacAndrew the gardener gave them to you? O Bob! tell me the truth. I'll be your friend if you will tell me the

truth ; and don't run away and be drowned, and "
—Mary's voice faltered.

"You wouldn't care ; nobody would care."

"Yes, I should care, very, very much ; and if you did not take those roots, I should be *gladder* then I can tell you. Did you take them, Bob ?"

"Yes, I did," the boy said ; "leastways Mr. MacAndrew, he gave me six tulip bulbs, and he left a dozen more lying under the bit of bass matting, and I—well, I took 'em, and sold the lot for four shillings ; there now, that's about it."

"It's dreadfully sad, Bob. I don't know how to help you now. But I think if you went and told Mrs. Dalton the truth, she'd speak for you at the Rectory. Sam says Joe Hawkins, the boy who went there, has got a place at Crediton, and the Rector wants a boy."

"They won't take me ; they say I'm a thief. No, I'll run away, and the sooner I'm drowned the better."

With this, Bob shuffled off rather more quickly than he had come, and Mary was left alone and desponding.

It was a comfort to see Mrs. Dalton coming up the road soon after, with the basket in her hand where the "cruel" work was lying for Mary to begin.

Mary's eye brightened when Mrs. Dalton displayed it. A lovely daffodil drawn on the piece of rough

cloth, with long leaves drooping over them, and a butterfly in the corner.

"Oh, I am afraid this is too difficult for me, ma'am," Mary said. "It is *so* pretty. And did you draw it out of your own head?"

"I copied the Lent lilies from those which grew in the meadow by the Rectory last spring. I drew them first on paper, and then I put what is called tracing paper between the thick drawing paper and the cloth. And then I take a pencil and mark on it, and it comes out in thin red lines on the cloth. Now, as you know the stitch, and have really learned it very quickly, I think you can begin these flowers. Here are the colours."

Mary was deeply interested, and proved an apt scholar, getting through a bud while Mrs. Dalton talked to her about Bob Curtis.

Mary eagerly told her story of how Bob wanted to run away to sea, and how he said every one hated him, and the sooner he was drowned the better.

"It is very foolish and wrong of Bob to talk in this way, and I don't think it shows he is really sorry. I will speak to him to-morrow, and, if I think he is penitent, I will try what I can do for him. You seem very anxious to help Bob, May."

The child's sweet pale face flushed crimson.

"Why is it, my dear?"

"Why, you see, ma'am, all the village goes against

the Curtises because of me ; so I ought to try to make it up to them. Our Sam says if it had not been a Curtis, Mr. MacAndrew would not have been so hard on Bob. But he had no business to take the hyacinths, though they were left under the matting. It does not make it any better, I know. Still I do hope Bob won't go and be drowned."

"May," Mrs. Dalton said gently, "do you know you bring back to me the words of our dear Lord and Master, and I feel He has given you the power to learn the lesson He taught: 'Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you'?"

"I don't think they are my enemies," said little Mary simply. "They did not mean to hurt me; but I don't like to say any more, please, ma'am, and here is Master Heathcote and old Busy."

CHAPTER X.

WHAT A PEACEMAKER CAN DO.

HEATHCOTE and Busy knew their way about the farm well enough. Busy's first mission was always to hunt up Mrs. Forster's sandy cat, and have the supreme joy of seeing her mount an apple-tree in the orchard to defy him. This over, he would snuff round Jack's cage, who was very little moved by his attentions, and did not even drop the nut he might happen to be cracking at the moment.

Heathcote's first visit was to the dairy, where he watched the milk in every stage of progress towards butter; and when the day happened to be one when the butter was turning out into pats to be marked with the device of a wreath and a star in the middle, that day was always a great day to Heathcote. Mrs. Forster had known Heathcote from the day when his mother had carried him up to the farm in his long robes to exhibit, with the pride of young mothers all over the world. In fact, Heathcote belonged to the

farm as much as to the cottage in some ways, and Mrs. Forster would say whenever his name was mentioned, there was not a young gentleman to match him that she ever came across. However full of pranks and fun he might be, he never forgot he was a gentleman, and was a child nobody could help loving.

"A bit masterful," Mr. Forster would rejoin, "a bit masterful, and big in his own eyes at times."

"He's big in other people's eyes," Mrs. Forster would retaliate; "and as to being masterful, I have no patience with your milk-and-watery boys, with no more good in them than the stuff I hear that they ladle out of London milk-pails."

Mrs. Forster, you see, drew her similes from the things about her, and they were sometimes rather forcible, even if a little strained.

But this particular day was a great one in the dairy and about the farm. Sam and his father were in one of the upland fields harvesting, and everything lay quiet and still in the glowing light of a late summer. A long summer it had been, for the cold wet June was forgotten now, and July and August had been so fine and warm, that they seemed a part of the radiant May when we first saw Heather and Harebell.

Heathcote had his usual slice of seedcake from Mrs. Forster, and seated himself on a big flower-

pot turned topsyturvy to eat it. Presently he said—

“You’ve heard about Bob Curtis, mother?”

“Yes, dear; May and I have been talking about him.”

“Penny says it is all spite to the Curtises, and that Bob has done no wrong.”

“He has confessed to a friend that he has done wrong, Heathcote. And if he is sorry, and will try to be a good boy, I will speak to the Rector about him, for his friend’s sake.”

“I did not think the Curtises had any friends here except Penny, and she is fond of Ellen Curtis because she makes her bonnets so smart. Who is Bob’s friend?”

Mrs. Dalton smiled, and laid her hand on Mary’s soft, wavy hair. “Here she is,” she said.

Heathcote started up and sent the big flower-pot rolling.

“That is good!” he said. “I am sure May has no reason to be friends with the Curtises.”

“She thinks she has, Heathcote, and a good one too.”

At this moment Mr. Forster’s heavy tread was heard, and his voice too—a hard, angry voice.

“I’ll not have the young thief skulking about my premises,” he said, as he let the big gate of the yard swing back in Sam’s face. “You dare to speak to him or let him come nigh the place, and I’ll break

my whip over your back as well as his. So now you know!"

The yard where the cows came for milking was at the farther side of the house, and Sam, instead of following his father round to the back premises, came towards the porch.

Sam's grin was the same as ever, as he came sheepishly towards Mrs. Dalton.

"What is the matter with father, Sam?" Mary asked.

"Oh!" said Sam, taking off his battered straw-hat, and running his fingers through the curls of reddish hair, which were matted to his head with the heat of the harvest-field, "only that young Bob Curtis was lying in the pear orchard when he came through, and father said he was up to no good, and punched his head. He can't abide a Curtis, let alone Bob. It wasn't my fault," continued Sam; "but it is all one, it's always my fault whatever happens," and the grin subsided and Sam's voice trembled.

"O Sam!" said little Mary, "then I'll make it right with father when he comes in to supper. It was my fault about Bob, though I don't know why he was lying there. I thought he had gone home or had run off to sea. Still I will tell father that it is my fault. Never mind, Sam, never mind."

"Always a little peacemaker," said Mrs. Forster,

coming up. "But the long and the short of it is, we must never so much as mention a Curtis by name again, let alone having that boy skulking about in the orchard. But father's hot-tempered, we all know that, Sam; don't you take it to heart, boy."

All this entering into the affairs at the farm had turned Heathcote's thoughts from his own troubles; and it was not till he was getting out his books for preparation in the evening that they again rose up before him.

The old exercise-books told their own tale—and a sad tale it was—of Bellfield's deceit.

That was hard to bear, but not half so hard as Mr. More's manner to him. For Heathcote had conceived a real and honest admiration for his tutor, and that he should call him jealous of Bellfield was almost more than he could bear. Something held him back from telling his mother. It would give her a bad opinion of Bellfield; it would make her feel that this plan of joining in a tutor was a failure; it would altogether worry his mother, and had she not enough to worry her as it was? for the large blue envelope which the postman had brought that afternoon, and which was lying on the table when she came in from the farm, had certainly worried her. She was lying on the sofa in the drawing-room, and did not come and sit with him at his preparation as usual. "No; I will say nothing," Heathcote said with a great sigh, as,

having finished his work, he put away his book. No; it will do no good; it won't make Mr. More think the better of me, and it will hurt the little sneak. One thing, I won't go on the moor with him to-morrow. I won't have anything to do with a holiday, just because he has acted a lie. I will go and do my work at the Grange for mother's sake, but I won't pretend to enjoy myself there."

Such were Heathcote's thoughts, and then he remembered he had not learned the psalm for his mother. He opened the Prayer-book, drew his chair to the table again with his foot, and turned the leaves over carelessly, and a dead rose fell out. He had put it in the Prayer-book one hot Sunday in July. He remembered it well, because his mother had talked so much to him about the Gospel of that Sunday, the tenth Sunday after Trinity.

Now his eye fell on the words, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged. Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned. Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." The boy stopped, and said aloud—

"That's the real reason May is so kind to the Curtises. There's the real reason too for not telling. I am so glad I did not tell. If I could hear Jesus speak now, *He* would say, 'Don't tell.'"

Ah! how happy Mrs. Dalton would have been could she have known that her teaching and her

prayers for her high-spirited boy were *not* in vain!

She was not to know then, for Heathcote went whistling into the drawing-room a little later, where he could scarcely see his mother in the twilight.

"Have you got a headache, mother?"

"Yes, dear, and"—

Mrs. Dalton stopped.

"And what, mother?"

"I have lost fifty pounds a year by the fall in some shares your dear father had. It is a good deal out of my means, and makes it seem more difficult than ever to think of sending you to a really good school. However, at present you are being so well taught, that I need not look forward anxiously—*too* anxiously. It is such a comfort to me that you are under Mr. More."

Now how glad Heathcote felt that he had not told his mother about the exercise.

"Is that what the letter was about," he asked, "the big blue letter?"

"Yes; it was to pay me exactly half the usual dividend or share of profit, you know."

"If you don't mind for yourself, mother, you need not mind about me. I don't want to go to school yet, unless I could get a scholarship, like Mr. More did at Rugby. He was telling us about it the other day. Yes, that's what I'll do; I'll get a scholarship,

and then you won't mind a bit about the fifty pounds, will you?"

"I shall not mind if you are a brave, good boy, darling," his mother said. Then Phoebe came in for prayers, and then they had supper, and Heathcote went to bed with a light heart.

He was asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow, and in this he was very different from the little peacemaker at the farm, whose example had insensibly affected him.

Mary tossed and turned in her little bed till day dawned, and then she fell into an uneasy slumber. Her mother, who was always up betimes, and always looked into the little room opening from her own before she went downstairs, heard her moaning and talking in her sleep. "Bob Curtis, Bob Curtis! if nobody else loves him, I will, I will."

"She is as feverish as she can be," the mother said, as she moved softly to the window and opened it to let in the sweet morning air. "She will never be well again, dear lamb; but I would rather have her as she is than fifty other healthy children, that I would."

Another little bed, not far from the farm, contained another restless sleeper. Bellfield was uneasy and troubled in mind. If Heathcote knew about the exercise, why did he not tell? Why did he look at him in that strange way? Bellfield loved Heathcote, and it was pain to him to lose his good

opinion. If he only dare tell him about the exercise! But then Mr. More must know, and his mother must know, and there would be such a fuss. He would never do the same thing again, but he need not tell; it would be so horrid to have to tell. Then Bellfield tried to get off to sleep, but he was never a very sound sleeper, and nervous and excitable, so that when anything fastened upon his fancy, he could not free himself from it.

Elsie, who occupied the room next to him, came in several times to ask him what was the matter, for while he tumbled and turned and talked so in his sleep she couldn't rest.

Bellfield said he was hot and thirsty, and Elsie brought him some lovely grapes, and turned his pillow, and put some eau-de-cologne on his forehead. So at last, with the weak compromise of, "I shall not tell this time, but I won't copy Heathcote's exercise again," he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XI.

WEASELS AND MOLES.



HERE was an unexpected change in the weather the next day, and a thick drizzle fell. "There will be no need for me to go up to the Grange," Heathcote said to himself, "and I shall have the day to myself, which will be jolly."

Mrs. Dalton was busy writing letters all the morning, and Heathcote was left to his own pursuits. These never failed him. "There's nothing to do," was an unknown grievance in the cottage.

What with collections of moths and collections of eggs, what with Busy and her frequent families, what with Bianca and her fights with the tabby cat in the next garden and her standing feud with Busy, what with the aquarium and its inhabitants, Heathcote's hands were full. On this wet day the bill of health amongst the tadpoles, and water-spiders, and minnows was very bad. Several newts were lying dead, and their neighbours were in a very dejected

condition of both body and spirit. So Heathcote decided to have a regular examination, and transfer the living into nice wide-mouthed bottles, while he cleaned out their glass house and put in fresh grass, and pebbles, and moss. By the time this was done the sky had cleared and the sun shone brightly.

"It is not fine enough for our holiday trip," Heathcote said to himself exultingly. "I shall have a walk with mother; I daresay she will take me to the Rectory, and then I can hear something about Bob Curtis."

But just as dinner was over—a dinner for which Mrs. Dalton had but little appetite—the gate in the garden walk was pushed open and there was Bellfield.

"Alone, I declare!" said Heathcote, starting up. "What does he want?"

Little Bellfield came shyly in, evidently not sure of his welcome.

Mrs. Dalton put her arm round him and said—

"You are getting quite a man, Harebell, walking about alone. Are you come to spend the afternoon with Heathcote?"

"Your mother does not know you are come, I'm certain," said Heathcote. "Does she, now?"

"Well, no; she knew I wanted to come, and Morris was busy, and Mr. More is at Exeter, and I thought I would come and find you, and"—

"But, my dear boy, your mother will be uneasy about you unless she knows where you are. You must go back at once with Heathcote and tell her."

"Must I? She will know I am here."

"She may guess it, and think it probable, but she will not be sure. Now, Heathcote!"

Heathcote showed no great alacrity in doing as was wished, and his brow clouded as he said—

"What a bore! Why didn't you wait till Morris was ready, as you are such a Molly?"

"I wanted you," said poor little Harebell, half crying. "It's so dull without you."

"Heathcote!"

The boy understood instantly the reproof in his mother's voice, still more in her eyes as they met his.

"Come on, Bellfield," he said good-naturedly. "We'll go to the Grange and let them know where you are, and then we will go round by the Cranham Falls. Wait a moment while I fetch my net. Those brown moths with the peacock eyes come out after rain."

"Oh, that will be jolly!" Bellfield said; "and I'll get my net too, and the tin Mr. More gave me."

As the boys were running off, Heathcote turned back suddenly and gave his mother a parting hug.

She understood it, and whispered, "I was so glad, Heathcote. I saw you got a victory."

Yes; and a greater one than she knew had Heathcote won; for it is *not* easy to forgive a deception practised on us by another, especially when, as in Heathcote's case, a sense of honour must keep us silent. It is not easy to bear the sense of injustice, to feel that if one whose good opinion we desire thinks meanly of us, we must not speak and defend ourselves, if we wish to please our dear Lord and Master, who set us an example that we should follow in His steps. Heathcote felt so happy this lovely afternoon; the mist and the rain were all gone, the sky was a fair pale blue, and the whole country seemed lulled in the soft delicious sunshine. The clear shining after rain!

Bellfield too was more at ease; he began to say to himself, "Heathcote does *not* know, after all;" and he chattered gaily about his collection of moths, and raced upstairs at the Grange to fetch his net. His absence had not been noticed by his mother. Mrs. St. Aubyn had had guests to luncheon, and was entertaining them in the drawing-room when Bellfield had run away to the cottage. But Morris and Elsie had missed the truant, and Morris had gone off in hot pursuit, while Elsie met the child with a torrent of reproaches. Bellfield broke away from her, and saying, "Mamma says I may go anywhere with Heather," set off helter-skelter with

his net and tin box, and joined Heathcote in the hall.

"Mamma has got people in the drawing-room; isn't it fun? Morris has gone off the short way to the cottage, and so he missed us. Come along, Heathcote, or we shall be stopped."

At this moment Elsie came flying down the staircase.

"You don't dare to stir till I tell your mamma, you naughty boy."

Bellfield only made a gesture which Elsie called "making a face," and joined Heathcote.

"Where are you going?" Elsie screamed out after them.

"Only up to Cranham Falls; we shall be back to tea," Heathcote said. "We have been there often before by ourselves, and Mrs. Aubyn knows it."

Elsie turned back now, and when Morris returned, hot and cross, from his bootless errand to the cottage, she told him that there was no harm in the young gentlemen going where they had been fifty times before, and they would be back to tea.

Morris was silenced, and the boys pursued their way.

Cranham Falls were very full after the rain, and the water came down merrily, throwing up feathery spray as it dashed over the big stones, singing its triumphant, happy song of freedom and joy.

"If we find the brown moth at all, it will be above the Falls," Heathcote said; "there is a narrow path up by the side to the right. Take care how you come, Bellfield; don't jam your foot in a rock again, because I could not carry you home as Mr. More did."

"I shan't be so stupid," was Bellfield's reply. "Look! there's a splendid butterfly."

"Only a common brimstone thing; but here goes!" and Heathcote gave his net a dexterous turn, and the poor "brimstone's" fate was sealed. He was imprisoned in the tin box, impaled, by Heathcote, and the boys went on their way.

The moths with the peacock's eyes were not forthcoming, and, after a long hunt, the children sat down to rest on a big boulder half a mile beyond the Falls.

I do not think, as a rule, children see the beauty of a landscape spread before them. They can appreciate, as Heathcote did, the sense of country and freedom, and all the countless forms of amusement and interest about them. Heathcote had eyes for all the details of his surroundings, but the wide expanse of moorland before him did not fill him with the admiration which a peacock-eyed moth did. A weasel running swiftly down its hole, with two little weasels at her heels, caused him immense delight, and Bellfield shared it.

"Did you ever see a mole?" Bellfield asked. "I

wish very particularly to see a mole. It is blind, isn't it?"

"Well, so they say, but no one is quite sure. Moles are first cousins to weasels."

"Like I am your cousin," Bellfield said.

"Nonsense! you are only my fiftieth cousin."

"I wish I was your brother," sighed Bellfield, "then perhaps you would care more for me."

Heathcote took no notice of this speech, but said presently, "Why do you want to see a mole?"

"Oh, because of that story of Hans Andersen's about Totty and the old mole with his soft fur pelisse, you know."

"No, I don't know. Tell me; I am sure to like it, if it is not rubbish about fairies."

"Well, it is a fairy story; but it seems true, and it is so splendid about the swallow."

"Oh, well, fire away! I like a story if it is not silly."

"Perhaps you will call this one silly, but I know grown-up people—Mr. More even—say Hans Andersen was a genii."

"Do use the right word—genius, you mean—genius is singular."

Bellfield corrected the word at once, and then began the story, which it would be a waste of time for me to write here.

Certainly Hans Andersen had that power which

turns the commonest and humblest things into gold. Birds, beasts, and even old toys, spoke to this man's heart. For him everything had a story, everything was full of life. Little Bellfield had tasted the sweets of these tales to the full; and now, as he related the story of Tottie and her adventures, Heathcote rolled himself into his favourite attitude on the turf, and beat the same tattoo with his feet as he did on the May-day when we saw him first.

And Bellfield told the story well—so well, that Heathcote, living in the dark underground house with Tottie, saw the little swallow lying apparently dead, saw Tottie warm it and comfort it, and at last, when it revived and lived, and Tottie escaped from the dreary old mole in the fur pelisse, and flew over the cold Northern seas on its back to the sunny South, Heathcote started upright in his interest, and said—

“You can tell a tale almost as well as mother can.”

Bellfield was flushed with delight at Heathcote's praise, and was beginning to think he would tell the “Christmas-Tree” next, when he saw Heathcote looking out steadily across the moor.

“We must go home,” he said abruptly; “the mist is rising again.”

“The mist! I don't see it.”

“That white line out there by Hount Tor. Make

haste; pack up the tin, and let us go back to Cranham Falls."

"It is so soon to go home!" Bellfield grumbled. "I want to tell you the 'Christmas-Tree' story."

"I tell you we must make haste. Get up directly; the mist is rising fast. Look there!"

And Bellfield, following the direction of the pole of Heathcote's net, saw indeed that a whitish-grey mist was creeping on towards them, and closing them in on every side.

"Why, we can't see Hount Tor now," Heathcote exclaimed. "Let's get down to the Falls, and then we shall soon be in the road that leads into the one which passes the back of the Grange. Here, give me your net, and don't stop a moment till I tell you. Now then!" and Heathcote set off at a swift even pace down the steep ascent up which they had toiled in the sunshine an hour before.

CHAPTER XII.

DARKNESS ON THE MOOR.



LITTLE Bellfield followed as fast as he could, but it was hard work for him, and before they were half way down the side of the hill, the mist had crept round them, and was wrapping them in its chill dense mantle.

"Why, Heathcote, I can hardly see you ; do stop," Bellfield called out, "do stop !"

"Come on," shouted Heathcote from below, "come straight on."

After much struggling and slipping, Bellfield reached Heathcote on the level ground by the Falls, and by this time it was difficult to make out anything distinctly. Heathcote stood still meditating for a moment, and then said—

"The mist may lift again at sunset, and anyhow I know my way blindfold. We must go straight on, and then turn to the right over the moor, and when we come to an old milestone, go straight off to the left, and there's the Grange road. Come on, Bellfield."

"Yes," said the child, "but"——

"But what?"

"I am tired, Heathcote, and I hope you have not lost your way."

"Lost my way, indeed! when I know every turn and twist within ten miles of Canaton? Just as if I should lose my way!"

Poor Bellfield could only say, "Of course you know the way. I only wish there was no mist; it's so nasty and gets down my throat."

"He will have the croup perhaps," Heathcote said to himself, but he took the child's cold, clammy hand in his, and they began their homeward walk—Heathcote humming a tune, and trudging on bravely with his stout, strong legs, showing no sign of fatigue or faltering.

Now and then he commented on the objects they passed.

"Everything looks so big in a mist," he said, "but that is the little stumpy oak tree by the old mill."

As he spoke, Heathcote came with a thump against a stone wall, which, though so near, he had not seen. He stopped short.

"What wall is this? I don't remember a wall. Oh, I see! We've come too far to the right. Yes, this is the way round. Why, here's a sheep. Stupid old thing to lie here! get up, can't you?" he said, as he bent down to the poor sheep.

"Why, it's dead, I do believe, or nearly dead," as the sheep gave a short moan. "Well, we can't stop, but as we pass, I'll just leave word at the farm about it. It is sure to be one of Farmer Forster's sheep. Here we are! Come on, Bellfield," and Heathcote began to whistle.

He did not lose confidence himself, till, after an hour's walking, he stood still, and said, "Hark!"

"What do you hear, Heathcote? Oh, do tell me. Is it a wolf, or a bull, or a"—

"Don't be stupid. It's water I hear. Why, we have come round to Cranham Falls again," he continued, as he made his way through the wet branches of the clustering maples and tangled undergrowth of trees and shrubs; "we have come back to the very place we started from. Well, we must try again."

"Go back again all that way? I can't, Heathcote, I can't; I am tired."

"I tell you we must; it is the nearest way, anyhow. We shall get down miles below Canaton if we go the other. Besides, it would be harder to find the way; and I do know the old milestone by the mill when I see it."

"But you thought you had come to the stumpy oak, and it was not the stumpy oak at all. O Heathcote! I'm so frightened."

"Well, I don't like it either," said Heathcote, rather unwillingly admitting his fears; "but we

must come right next time, for I know just when I went wrong. I went too much to the left. Yes; I see exactly how it was."

In spite of Heathcote's efforts to be cheerful and encourage himself as well as his companion, he felt more and more bewildered as, the sun setting, the light began to fail, and the mist became deeper and denser, and wetted the children with its continuous drizzle.

The stillness of all around them as they got beyond the sound of the waterfall again was most oppressive. "If only a bird would twitter, or a sheep baa, or a cow moo!" Heathcote thought. But, accustomed as the hardy little fellow was to wander on the moors alone, his heart began to fail him as he plodded on, dragging Bellfield after him, and seeing more and more indistinctly every step he took.

Another long and weary trudge, and once more Heathcote stopped.

"Bellfield, I do believe it is the water again; Cranham Falls again. Listen!"

"Yes, it *is*; we have come round and round, just as we did before. What shall we do?"

Bellfield now sank down on the ground and said—

"Oh, I am so tired, and so wet, and so miserable! O Heathcote! we shall never get home."

Heathcote's lip was quivering, and he could hardly command himself to speak calmly.

"Nonsense, Bellfield! You *must* get up and come on. We will try the lower fall now, and perhaps we shall come upon a shepherd's cottage or a farm; only you *must* come on."

It was getting late now and very dark. The brooding mist hung more heavily than ever, the stillness was unbroken, and the position was indeed a terrible one for two little boys of ten years old.

Presently Heathcote said, "We will shout out with all our might; perhaps somebody may be out looking after the sheep, and may hear us." Then Heathcote raised his voice and shouted, "Hallo! Hallo-o!" till he was hoarse, Bellfield trying to strengthen the cry with his shrill treble.

Then as every shout died away, and no answering sound broke the silence, Heathcote said, "It is no use; no one hears. Let us come on."

Bellfield was now sobbing convulsively, and Heathcote could scarcely drag him along. For some time they went on, and at last Heathcote said—

"We are on the road now; it must be the road which leads into the lane behind Canaton. But I wonder which way I ought to go?"

"Is it many miles now?" Bellfield asked. "Is it many miles we still have to go?"

"Three at least," Heathcote said; "but that isn't

so much, if only I was sure of the turn to take, if only I could see."

"I can't walk so far," Bellfield said, "I *can't*; my feet are so sore and my head aches."

"You must get on my back then, as you did on Mr. More's. I will try if I can carry you."

But the effort was unavailing. Strong as Heathcote was, he too was worn out; and as Bellfield slid down from his back he gave way at last, and cried—

"O mother, mother! she will be so anxious! What shall we do?"

A dark object close to the children now attracted Heathcote. He held Bellfield by the hand and groped about till he found what he expected, that it was one of the rude huts raised here and there in this wild district to keep the fodder for the cattle dry, and to afford a shelter for a sheep with very young lambs in the early spring days of frost and snow.

"Yes," Heathcote said, "it is the hut. I know where we are now. I have been in it often. It's about three miles from Canaton, but as it is so dark and so—so—cold, we had better stay here till the morning. I may lose myself again. I may pull you down a steep bit of quarry which is not far off. I may"——

Heathcote's voice broke down into a sob.

"But it's so dark, I dare not stay here. O Heathcote! I dare not."

"We must stay here," Heathcote said, recovering his own courage at Bellfield's wailing cry. "We must stay here. Here is some dry straw, and we'll heap it up, and lie down on it. But first I am going to say my prayers."

All in the darkness, which might be felt, Heathcote knelt with Bellfield's hand in his, and in a low reverent voice repeated his usual prayer, adding, after a pause—

"Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and of Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Say Amen, Bellfield, say Amen, and then we will lie down, and perhaps we may go to sleep."

"I can't, I dare not. I want to tell you something, Heathcote. Then you will be so angry, but please don't say you will never forgive me; I couldn't bear that. I have taken great bits out of your old exercise-book. That's how Mr. More came to praise me so; that's how we got this holiday. And if we hadn't got the holiday, we should not have been out here in the dark and cold. Heather, do you hear? I copied my French exercise out of your old book."

"I know you did," said Heathcote shortly, "I know you did. I found out by your drawings shut up in the book."

"You knew it and didn't tell? O Heathcote! you don't mean it."

"*Tell!* You don't think I would be such a sneak as that?"

"Oh, how good you are! O Heathcote! I always have loved you so much. Do forgive me, and love me a little bit."

Heathcote put his arm round Bellfield's little shuddering figure and drew him close. "Yes, Bellfield, we will be friends now, but you will give up shams and cheats, won't you? Then I will stick to you through thick and thin, and you will be like what that little brother of mine would have been to me if he had lived. You must tell Mr. More and your mother all about it."

"And your mother too?"

"Oh, I don't know; that's another thing. You did not cheat her, you know."

"But I cheated you, and it is the same thing. Yes, I'll tell them all; and I will say I am sorry for running off, as I did, from Morris and Elsie this afternoon."

"Yesterday, you mean," said Heathcote; "I am sure it must be past midnight."

"Oh, shall we ever, ever get home again?" Bellfield said. "Hold me close, Heathcote, I am so frightened. I can't even see my fingers if I hold them up."

"Keep your eyes shut then. Let us both keep our eyes shut, and then we shall not feel the dark-

ness so much ; and God's angels may be here ; the light and the dark is all the same to them."

"There's a verse about it Elsie used to read to me when I was a very little boy. I wish I could remember it. Only a baby verse, and you would laugh at it, but I know it says—

' My dear mother says the angels
Stand all night around my bed,
With their loving eyes wide open
And their shining wings outspread.

' What, then, need I be afraid of,
Though it's very dark, I know ?
That's no matter to the angels,
Their bright eyes can see it through.

' Oh ! how kind of God to send them
From their singing by His throne,
Just because—just because—because ' "——

Poor little Harebell's voice sank into a whisper, and he and Heathcote were in another minute sound asleep on their bed of straw.

Heathcote and Harebell—like the flowers whose names they bear—lie sleeping on the moorland with no one near. But when the morning dawns, they too, like the flowers, will lift up their heads, for the angels, who see the face of their Father in heaven, are watching over them.

CHAPTER XIII.

SEEKING THE LOST.

WHEN the boys were gone and Morris's inquiries for Bellfield answered, Mrs. Dalton roused herself from brooding over her own troubles, and went out to see if she could help Bob Curtis. But people like the Curtises are very hard to help; and when Mrs. Dalton arrived at the house, she heard such a confusion of voices that she thought she should do no good by entering it.

As she was passing on towards the Rectory she heard the shuffling of feet behind her, and turning, saw Bob.

"Please, ma'am," he began, "I've been down to the Rectory, and the old gentleman won't have nothing to say to me; pr'aps if you put in a word and spoke up for me, the parson might listen."

"But, Bob, before I speak up for you, as you say, I must feel sure you are really sorry for the past. You have been a very troublesome boy, Bob, and a very naughty one too."

"I knows it," said Bob. "We're a bad lot. They are all screeching and storming now at our place, because there has been some acid stuff thrown over the linen from the Grange, and no one will own to it. They want to make out I had a hand in it, of course, but I had not."

They were near the cottage now where Mrs. Dalton had several classes for boys and girls apart from the village school. Mrs. Dalton kept a room here for various purposes, and it was a dispensary, and library, and consulting place for all her poor neighbours.

Her own little home was too small to keep what is called a "parish room," and Mr. Parker, the rector, had a sick, infirm wife, and was only too glad that Mrs. Dalton should relieve him of anxiety and continue to act the part of rector's wife.

Into this cottage Mrs. Dalton now turned and ordered Bob Curtis to follow her. The woman who lived in the cottage with her blind mother came curtsying to the door, and brought the key of the room where Mrs. Dalton had so often listened to the complaints of young and old with a sympathising attention that won many hearts.

"What are you hanging about here for?" Mrs. Lowe said sharply to Bob, who had once stolen some pears from a tree which grew behind the cottage, and broken a pane of glass in the kitchen window with

a stone thrown with such violence that Mrs. Lowe's blind mother was sadly frightened. "Be off," Mrs. Lowe repeated. "It's one of them Curtises, ma'am, and the worst of them."

"He came down the village with me," Mrs. Dalton said; "I want to speak to him quietly. Come in, Bob."

Bob looked triumphantly and defiantly at Mrs. Lowe, and passed her on the threshold of the door with an ungainly lurch.

I am not going to write all Mrs. Dalton said to Bob Curtis, nor tell you how she knelt down with him and prayed for him.

A whole hour passed before the door opened, and Bob came out, his head hanging down, his poor dirty little face smeared, where hot tears had poured down his cheeks.

He returned up the village towards his home, and Mrs. Dalton, after a few kind words to Mrs. Lowe and her mother, went to plead Bob's cause with the Rector.

Now Mrs. Dalton could never open the gate without a pang. She could not forget the happy years she had spent there. This afternoon she could almost fancy she should see her husband, as she had so often seen him, with Heathcote at his side, and his fair haired little brother in his arms, and hear his clear ringing voice calling her by name. The Rectory was always full of life and energy in those days; now it

seemed asleep in the September sunshine. Mr. Parker prided himself on his flower-beds, and they were certainly a blaze of colour on the smooth green turf this afternoon. Mrs. Dalton loved flowers also, and taught Heathcote to love them, but she did not care so much for these stiff beds with regular borders of dark leaves, bright-yellow, scarlet, and blue.

Mr. Parker was, as Mrs. Dalton approached, carefully removing a few scattered leaves from the gravel path, and she was close to him before he saw her.

"Always welcome," Mr. Parker said, "and where's the youngster? At the Grange, I suppose. The young tutor is a fine fellow, perhaps rather wise in his own eyes—a failing of these times."

"It is a lovely afternoon," Mrs. Dalton said, "and how bright your flowers look!"

"Yes, yes; but I am bothered by losing that sharp boy Joe. He is going to better himself at Crediton."

"So I hear," Mrs. Dalton said. "I want you to try Bob Curtis in his place."

"*You* want me to try Bob Curtis! Why nothing is safe where he is, the young rascal; he comes of a bad stock, as you know."

"Do try him, nevertheless, Mr. Parker. You may be saving a lost sheep; you may be holding out a hand to help one who sorely needs help. I have had a long talk with Bob. He has been very

naughty, and most decidedly took those roots, carelessly left in his way at the Grange ; but I think he is penitent, and I think he wishes to turn over a new leaf. Little May Forster has by her sweet forgiving gentleness made an impression on the boy. I think there is good in him."

Mr. Parker raised himself from the contemplation of a beautiful geranium, and said—

"You think there's good in every one, my dear madam. You hope for the best, and you hope in vain, times without number."

"I know," said Mrs. Dalton, "that my Master came to seek and save the lost. I know that He told the story of the joy in heaven over *one* sinner that repents—a greater joy than that which is felt for those who think they need no repentance. I am very, very anxious to do something for the Curtis family, for it is a disgrace to the village that there is nothing but ill-will cherished against them."

"Justly, eh ? You can't deny it."

"There has been great provocation, I grant, but I don't think Canaton has gone the right way to effect a change in the Curtises."

"Well, you may be right. I'll give the boy a trial to please you. Mind, to please *you*. Let him come down on Monday, and Joe will drill him a little ; but let him understand it is on trial—and only on trial."

"Thank you so much," Mrs. Dalton said. "I wanted something to cheer me to-day, for I have heard bad news about one of our investments," and then Mrs. Dalton told the Rector about the contents of the big blue envelope.

On this subject she did not fail to have much sympathy, and she went into the Rectory to take tea with poor Mrs. Parker, and to listen with patience to the oft-repeated tale of her suffering from rheumatic gout and her childless life.

It was not till nearly seven o'clock that Mrs. Dalton left the Rectory. As soon as she was outside the gate, she was conscious of the presence of the thick mist, which had crept up and enveloped everything in a shroud.

"How dark and chill it is!" she said as she bade Mr. Parker good evening, "and so dark. The children will have got back to the Grange by now, I hope."

"Ah! these mists are a great drawback to the moors," Mr. Parker said, "but this is the thickest I ever remember in my time."

Mrs. Dalton walked home quickly, for the fog made her cough. It was difficult to discern any one in the gathering gloom.

"Bob Curtis, is that you?" she asked as she drew near the gate.

"Yes, ma'am, and here's Mr. Morris."

"The young gentlemen are in the house, I suppose, ma'am," Morris began.

"Here! no, I think not. Penelope, is Master Heathcote come home?"

"No, ma'am; he is up at the Grange with Master St. Aubyn. They went off together soon after dinner."

"Well, they are not at the Grange," said Morris, "that's very certain. Mrs. St. Aubyn is getting so anxious that I came off here. Talk of London," said Morris; "I have never seen a thicker fog there, not even in November."

Mrs. Dalton's white face and low trembling voice struck Penelope with a sense of fear and dismay for her mistress.

"I daresay they are at the Grange by this time," Penelope said. "It's a pity you came down here with your fidgets and fancies. Why, Master Heathcote he knows the moor as well as I know my own kitchen. He can find his way for miles and miles."

"But this fog, Penelope, this dreadful mist," and Mrs. Dalton shuddered.

"Oh, well, what's a mist when you know the way? Nothing! Why, Master Heathcote can find his way blindfolded; there never was such a child."

"Busy is not with the boys, then? I wish Busy had gone," Mrs. Dalton said, stooping to pat Busy's upturned face.

"I'm of opinion," said Penelope, "Busy never has been fond of going to the Grange since Tiny died there. She is as knowing as any human creature."

"Well, now, I can't stand here talking," said Morris; "I must be off home again, if I can feel my way, that's to say."

Mrs. Dalton was already out of sight in the fog, and believing she was alone, for Penelope had rushed into the house to get her cloak for her mistress, and Morris waited for her.

Presently she felt a hand touch her.

"It's me, please, ma'am," said Bob. "I am going off to look for the young gentlemen; you will let me, won't you?" For Bob had lurked near, though unseen, and had heard the whole conversation about the lost children.

"Yes," Mrs. Dalton said; "yes, the more the better." And then Penelope came up with the cloak, which she threw over her mistress, and they all went on to the Grange together.

The alarm there was greater than ever. Nothing had been seen of the boys, and every one seemed helpless. Mrs. St. Aubyn ran wildly up and down the hall, and called every one to go and find her darling. Then she burst out into tears and cries that he would die of cold, that he was perhaps dead already, that no one would stir to help her to find him.

In the midst of the confusion the dog-cart, which had been sent to the station to meet Mr. More, returned. He saw the frightened group collected under the lamp in the hall, and heard Mrs. St. Aubyn's excited cries.

"What is it?" he exclaimed, jumping down from his seat; "what has happened?"

"Heathcote and Bellfield have not come home; they are, we fear, lost in the fog, and cannot find their way. Tell us what is best to do."

It was Mrs. Dalton who spoke, a whole world of misery in her quiet low voice, and a ring of anguish in it which thrilled through Mr. More with keen sympathy.

"We must lose no time," he said. "Send down to the farm for Mr. Forster. We must go out in several directions with lanterns. Come, look sharp, Tom," Mr. More said to the groom; "don't stand still. Drive to the farm; it will be quicker. Does any one know in which direction the children went?"

"I believe they were going to Cranham Falls," said Elsie. "I begged and prayed Master St. Aubyn not to go off, and so did Morris."

"You are not to be trusted for a moment," said Mrs. St. Aubyn. "You have been most shamefully careless. Oh! my child, my child! Mr. More, pray show some energy."

"I think you and Mrs. Dalton had better go into

the drawing-room and wait there. We will do our best to find the boys. Probably they are near home by this time, and I trust the suspense will not be prolonged. It is still quite early, though the mist gathering round like this makes it so dark. Try to keep up heart, Mrs. St. Aubyn, and let us trust in God."

"I should like to come with you," Mrs. Dalton said; "I should like to know the worst as soon as possible."

"It is impossible for you to come," Mr. More said; "you could not walk as quickly as we can, and besides you would run a great risk. I feel certain the boys are safe; do not look so hopeless."

"What do you say?" Mrs. St. Aubyn asked. "Hopeless! oh! do not say it is hopeless;" and then a fresh series of lamentations and cries set in.

From the window of the drawing-room, half an hour later, Mrs. Dalton watched the two parties set out on their search. Farmer Forster, Sam, and Mr. MacAndrew, the gardener, led the way, their lanterns showing like blurred spots in the murky darkness as they moved off. Mr. More, Morris, and the groom followed with lanterns; and there was yet another who joined in the search, keeping well behind, and saying only in his heart—

"I hope he isn't lost. I'd like to be the first to find him, that I would, for her sake. She has been so

kind to me, and nobody else ever was, 'cept little May at the farm."


The long, long hours of that sad night passed slowly and wearily to Mrs. Dalton. She had to comfort and support Mrs. St. Aubyn, who seemed almost to forget that in this terrible anxiety her companion had an equal share. Oh, how the mother's eyes were strained by gazing out into the darkness from the window, which was blurred with moisture! How hard it was to hear only Mrs. St. Aubyn's vain regret and perpetual blame of Elsie, of Morris, of Mr. More! Penelope mounted guard by her mistress, but felt that silence was golden, and seldom spoke. Every hour the misery of suspense grew more intolerable. Every hour the prayer which was perpetually offered up to God by Mrs. Dalton seemed to grow fainter and more faint.

If Mrs. Dalton had been asked, she would have told you that in the hours of that long, sad night, years of agony seemed concentrated. But through it she could yet hear the voice of the Lord she loved saying—

"Thy son liveth."

CHAPTER XIV.

A LONG, LONG NIGHT.

ONLY those who know the district of the moors can tell how difficult it is to regain the right track when once it is lost, or to distinguish one great castle-like boulder from another, when the shape of all are so much alike. At Cranham Falls the two parties separated, Mr. More and Morris taking one direction, Mr. Forster the other.

"Who is this?" Mr. More said, as Bob Curtis pulled his coat to attract attention. "What boy is this?"

"One of the Curtis lot, who are never after any good," said the groom promptly. "Here, be off!"

"Please, sir," said Bob, "I know the way about here as well as Master Heathcote; do 'ee let me come along. This path we are in now leads right off down the quarry, and is dreadful dangerous. You turn to the left, sir."

"Go about your business," growled Morris; "who would trust you?"

Bob was so used to be mistrusted and scouted, that he did not heed what was said to him, and only kept persistently by Mr. More's side.

The groom was in front with one lantern, and Morris carried another. The dense fog wrapt them round, so that only a blurring speck of light showed the way as the groom plodded on through bracken and heather with slow, cautious step. Every now and then Mr. More shouted, and Bob, putting his fingers to his lips, made a sharp ringing whistle, but there was no answering cry. After several hours spent in tramping about, a light just ahead made Mr. More exclaim, "Here is some one at last."

Alas! Farmer Forster's voice answered.

The two parties had come round to the same meeting-place from opposite directions, and as yet no trace of the lost children.

It was now three o'clock, and dawn would break in another hour or two.

The fog would lift at sunrise, and till then it seemed useless to proceed. It was hard to go back to the Grange with no tidings, and Mr. More shrank from it. But after some consultation it was agreed that Farmer Forster and Morris should return, and that Sam and Mr. More and the groom should go on with the search.

"It will break the long monotony of the night," Mr. More said, "if they hear something at the

Grange; and yet I cannot rest. I feel as if I must go on till I find the boys."

"That's how I feel, sir," Sam said. "We may stumble on them any minute, and I shan't give up."

"You'll just wander about for no good," Farmer Forster said, "and then in the end you'll come to the same spot again. I've not lived all my life on these moors for nothing."

All this time Bob had dodged Mr. Forster and Sam, and they had not seen him; but as soon as the farmer and Morris had departed, Bob again pulled Mr. More's coat.

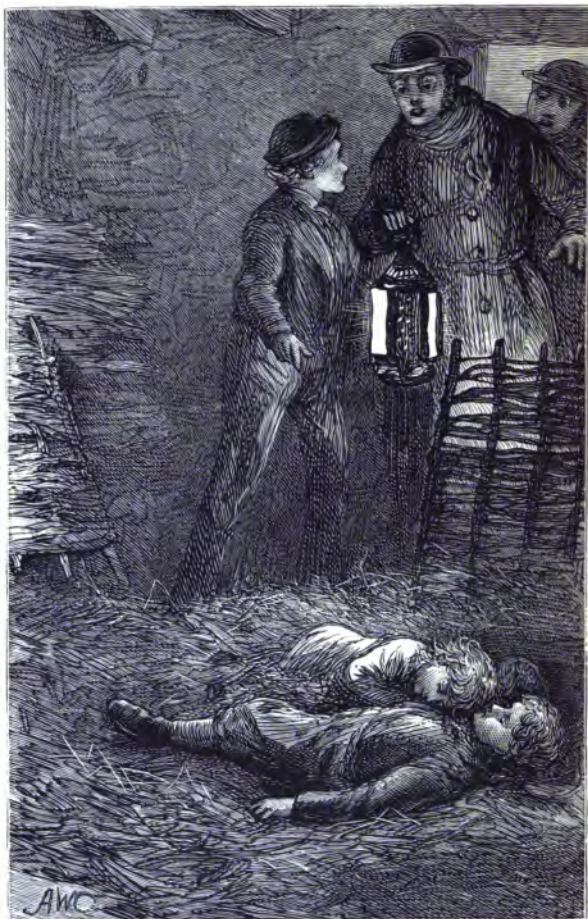
"You come round this way, sir. I know we ain't far from the huts where they put the sheep. I know it by this bunch of firs."

"Firs!" Mr. More exclaimed. "How do you know we are near firs?"

"You hark, sir! They're always a singing and sighing up in the top of firs; and you feel this; it's the trunk of a fir—you may tell it by the smooth feel. Now I know the huts ain't so far off, and should not wonder if the little gentlemen ain't under one of them."

"Well, we can but try. Move on, Sam."

Sam grunted something which was not quite audible, but which was to the effect that folks should mind their own business, and not set up to be wiser than their neighbours.



"Heathcote lay with his arm round little Bellfield."—Page 133.

Bob, however, was not discouraged, and trudged along, but Sam Forster came to a dead halt. He had nearly stumbled over the dead sheep which the children had also seen. The lantern was turned on it, and Mr. More gave a sigh of inexpressible relief as he saw it was only a sheep lying, now stark and cold and dead. What if it had been one of the children they were seeking?

As we know, the hut was not far distant now, and although Sam passed it once or twice, and murmured that the huts were at least a mile away, they came upon the one at last where the children lay.

Mr. More heard Sam's glad cry—

"Here they are, sir," and the next moment he was in the hut, his lantern making a circle of light round the figures of the two sleeping children.

A sight which Mr. More will never forget, a sight which gave Sam Forster an odd choking feeling in his throat, and made Bob Curtis cry outright. Heathcote lay with his arm round little Bellfield, whose pale face was half hidden by the golden hair, which, damp and tangled, lay in heavy masses against Heathcote's blue serge suit. Both children looked as if the angels of whom little Bellfield had spoken were whispering pleasant thoughts to them. Heathcote's rosy lips had even a smile on them, and Bellfield's little face, so often clouded by discontent and querulous desire to get his own way, was calm

and peaceful. The light shining on his face made Heathcote move a little, and he said in a dreamy voice, incoherently, as people always speak in their sleep—

“I shan’t tell mother; he can’t help it, I suppose. Mr. More said his exercise was a credit—and—he said I ”——

“Heathcote, dear boy !”

The voice of his tutor brought Heathcote from the land of confused dreams to the present. He started up and said—

“Yes, mother; is it seven o’clock? Oh, I see now. Why, Sam, I’m glad you are here; it’s been awfully dark, and we were so frightened. But—but”——

The brave little heart gave way at last, and he began to cry and sob with the reaction of all he had gone through.

“Is mother frightened about me?—is—but”——

Mr. More told him not to talk yet. Then lifting poor little Bellfield into his arms, he kissed the pale, baby face, which was so still and white.

“He’ll have got the croup, I expect,” Heathcote said, conscious even then of a little sharp pang that Mr. More cared more for Bellfield than for him. “He’ll have got the croup; but we couldn’t help it. We were only at Cranham Falls, and there the fog blinded us. We walked miles and miles, and I

tried to carry him, and could not. There, Bellfield, wake up ; we are all safe now."

"We saw a dreadful dead sheep," said Bellfield, struggling back to consciousness. "Oh, I hope we shan't lie out on the moor dead like that dreadful thing," and the child shuddered and closed his eyes again.

"Shall we carry them home, Sam ?" Mr. More said ; "can we find the way ?"

"Well, sir," Sam said, "the dawn is breaking and the fog lifting. Look, sir !"

And Mr. More, to his inexpressible relief, saw the first faint gleam of the daylight struggling through the door of the hut, and said—

"Let us carry them home at once. Thank God they are safe !"

"I can walk," said Heathcote, shaking himself, "I can walk ; no one need carry me. You can take Bellfield." But Heathcote was surprised to find, when he attempted to walk even across the hut to the door, that he was so stiff that he could hardly put one leg before the other ; and Sam Forster said—

"Better get on my back, sir, and we'll lead the way."

"Poor Bob !" Mr. More said kindly ; "Mrs. Dalton shall know how sharp you were in directing us to the hut. Don't cry, my boy."

"I'd do anything for her," Bob sobbed, "she's just

been the only one who ever spoke kind to me, and I'd—why, I'd do anything for her, that I would. There's nobody like Mrs. Dalton."

Heathcote's heart swelled with joy as he heard Bob speak in that way of his mother, and he said—

"Mother will get you the place at the Rectory, Bob, I know. Cheer up, Bob!"

As the procession moved on, little Bellfield still lying quietly in Mr. More's arms, the daylight strengthened. It was strange to see how the fog rolled away in great cloudlike masses, how the tops lifted their heads out of the mist, how the tops of the trees came out of it, and how, as the sun neared the horizon, the birds began their song of greeting and the cattle lowed in the fields; and as they drew near the Grange the cocks in the farmyard crowed, and life and sound seemed to return to the earth, over which the thickness of darkness had been lying since the sun set the evening before.

Worn out with grief, and unable to lay hold of any comfort, Mrs. St. Aubyn had fallen into an uneasy sleep, and Elsie had covered her with a shawl. The other watcher, Mrs. Dalton, had scarcely changed her position all that long night. Her eyes were fixed on the darkness outside the circular window of the Grange drawing-room, from which by day a glimpse could be had of the road outside the plantation leading up to Cranham Falls. Along that

road she had seen the dim, faint speck of the lanthorn disappear; by that road she knew they would return. At last there was a star of light.

"Penelope," she said, "they are coming!"

It was, as we know, Farmer Forster, whom Mrs. Dalton met in the hall with Morris.

"No sign of them yet, ma'am. Mr. More and my son are gone on. We have come back, as we thought you would——" The good farmer stopped at sight of the agony in the face which had sought his with such hungry eagerness.

"We are starting again, ma'am. Day will soon break now, and we shall have a better chance."

"Do not wake Mrs. St. Aubyn," Mrs. Dalton said, as she returned to her position by the window. "Do not wake her. Oh, dear Penelope, my faith is sorely tried." For an instant Mrs. Dalton laid her head on her faithful servant's shoulder, and one great sob shook her frame. Then she whispered—

"Pray for me, Penelope."

"My dear mistress, that I do, and when the morning comes we'll see the dear child back."

"When the morning comes!" Mrs. Dalton said. "It is such a long, long night. When *will* the day break and the shadows flee away?"

Let boys who read this story take home to their very hearts how great is their mother's love for them. If it could be measured, it would be measured by

pain like that which Mrs. Dalton suffered that night. Should not such love stir every high-spirited boy to repay it by an effort to be all that his mother desires—full of tender obedience and consideration for her who loves him so well?

CHAPTER XV.

RECOVERED.



HE two tired children were carried down the road to the Grange just as the first sunbeams were gilding the tords with their brightness.

The dawn had indeed broken and the shadows had fled when Heathcote, struggling to his feet, went to his mother's outstretched arms as she stood in the hall, and there cried as he had not cried since he was quite a baby.

Things looked more serious with little Bellfield; he was white and cold, and scarcely seemed to notice any one, talking in low murmurs incoherently, as when they first found him, and showing no real recognition of his poor mother. Her distress was indeed sad, and many anxious days were in store for her. While Heathcote's strong, vigorous constitution required but a day's rest in bed to be nearly himself again, little Bellfield, as might have been expected, was very dangerously ill. He had an

attack of the dreaded croup, and then rheumatic fever set in. The child's life was in great danger, and for some days nothing was thought of but him. Mrs. Dalton was taken by surprise at Heathcote's keen interest and sorrow.

"I hope he will get well," he repeated one evening when he and his mother were alone together. "I do hope he will get well."

"I pray God to spare his life to his poor mother, Heathcote. You pray also, I know."

"Yes, mother," answered Heathcote passionately, "yes, mother; and I have been so unkind to Bellfield—set myself up, and been—oh! so awfully cocksy! That's why I do want him to live—that I may show him I mean to be different."

"Ah! Heathcote," his mother said, "yours is the experience of many of us. We go on day after day, and we never know we love those about us till death comes to teach us how much we care for them."

"You could never have felt that, mother, never!" Heathcote said in a choked voice. "If I were to die, you'd only have to think how kind——" The boy broke down, and rushed away to hide his tears.

At the end of a fortnight Bellfield was pronounced better, and Mr. More came down to the cottage to say that Heathcote's lessons might begin again—Mrs. St. Aubyn wished it.

"I offered to give up here altogether," Mr. More said, "but she will not hear of it; the poor child has taken an unaccountable fancy to me."

Mrs. Dalton smiled. "Both your pupils seem to have this unaccountable fancy," she said. "We have never had any talk together about Heathcote. This time of illness seems to have put all things out of our heads. Now I may ask what you think of my boy?"

"Well," Mr. More said, "I need scarcely tell you what you know already. He is a boy to be proud of—excellent abilities, courageous, and manly. Of course there is a 'but.' I have been—perhaps I *am*—one of his own sort, and so I can read him by the light of experience."

"You mean," Mrs. Dalton said, "that he has too high an opinion of himself?"

Mr. More made a gesture of assent.

"I think Heathcote has had a sharp lesson. This illness of Bellfield's has taught it. And he is much more humble since the night on the moor, and all that has followed it."

"I daresay," Mr. More said. "I know by experience how these lessons are learned. There is just a little jealousy about him, which I regret. It is not so much the self-assertion of 'I am right, and I must be right,' but there is the cloud and

vexation if another is praised more than he is. He was jealous of that poor little Bellfield, and showed it."

No mother can hear another speak in dispraise of her child without a sharp pain. Mrs. Dalton felt the pain at this moment, but she said quietly—

"I never thought he was jealous, but then I have had no opportunity of judging. He has for *two* years now, ever since he was of an age to understand, been first with me."

"Yes," Mr. More said, "that is evident enough. You will let him come up to the Grange to-morrow, and not hate me for speaking out my mind?"

Mrs. Dalton smiled, rather sadly, Mr. More thought, and he said to himself, "I wish I had not used the word 'jealous.'"

"What do you think of little Bellfield?" she said presently.

"Oh, he will do now. We have a London nurse, and a doctor three times a day; and the child has everything that heart can desire. But his brother, my friend Randolph, who was here when he was at his worst, said the child altogether was a wonder, considering all things."

"By the bye," Mr. More said, changing the subject, "you and I have another 'mutual friend.' There's something in that boy Bob Curtis which I like.

The way he trudged along by my side that night on the moor—the way he bore contumely and reproach and hard words, was wonderful.”

“He is too well used to them,” Mrs. Dalton said. “Poor Bob! he is one of a family for whom no one has a good word in Canaton.”

“Except yourself,” Mr. More said, laughing.

“Except you,” Mrs. Dalton replied.

“How is the poor little fellow getting on at the Rectory?”

“Very well, so far. I almost think he will end in living down Canaton prejudice. I wish I could feel as sure the girls would do the same,” Mrs. Dalton said. “They are, I fear, all but hopeless, running wild about the village, and doing harm to others; but I never give up any one.”

“Well, Bob Curtis may do something at home. When the others see it is in the long-run pleasant to be respectable and well conducted, they may turn over a new leaf.”

“It won’t be your fault if it is not so.”

That evening, when Mr. More was sitting with Bellfield, he said—

“You won’t have so much of my company next week, my boy, for Heathcote is coming back to his work again.”

“I am glad of that,” Bellfield said. “I wish mother

would let me see him; it would do me good instead of harm."

"Oh, I daresay, when Heathcote is in the house you may see him. You are getting much stronger."

"Mr. More," Bellfield said, "I have got something to tell you, very, *very* particular. Please, do try to like me just a little when I have told it. Promise!"

"You and I are fast friends, little Harebell. When that is the case anything we hear does not alter friendship!"

"You can't like me just the same when you know, Mr. More, but I shall never be happy till I have told you. It's about that French exercise. I copied Heathcote's double-line exercise; that's why there were no mistakes—that's why I got so praised. I told Heathcote when we were out in the dark that night. He was so kind! I *love* Heathcote, and he said he would like me for his real brother—like that little Bertram who died. Mr. More, are you dreadfully angry?"

"No, Bellfield, I am not angry. I am dreadfully sorry, and this fault of yours has had very sad consequences. It has caused me to misjudge Heathcote, and think he did not like to hear you praised; and when I spoke sharply to him I hurt him, because it hurts every one to be misjudged."

"I know it," poor little Bellfield said, hiding his face in the pillow, "I know it; and Heathcote knew

all the time what I had done, and never told it, but bore it."

"Brave boy!" Mr. More exclaimed. "He has conquered himself, and that is a grand conquest for any of us."

Then Mr. More took one of Bellfield's little thin hands in his as a token of forgiveness, and talked to him seriously of the sin of deceit, and how it is in God's sight most hateful.

"I must tell mother," the boy said, "and Mrs. Dalton ought to know. And I do long to see Heathcote. I wish mother would let me see him."

"She is afraid of your talking too much; but I will see about it when Heathcote comes on Monday."

Heathcote was more glad than he could have believed possible to find himself once more in the library at the Grange with his books and his papers.

As soon as the morning's work was over, Mr. More told him he was to see Bellfield for a few minutes, but that he had promised Mrs. St. Aubyn that he should not stay long, and not talk of the night on the moor.


"But before you go and see Bellfield," Mr. More said, "I have to say a word to you. You were very noble and brave in the matter of the French exercise. I was mistaken in my judgment of you, I freely acknowledge. Shake hands with me, Heathcote, and let this make us closer friends."

Heathcote held out his little brown strong hand, and Mr. More clasped it with a firm pressure.

"I shall never forget the exercise with the double lines," he said with a smile, "and the lesson it has taught me, not to take things too much for granted. Use your influence over Bellfield, my boy, to make him as honourable and truthful as yourself. Now, we will go and see him; the time hangs heavy on his hands in that quiet room."

CHAPTER XVI.

A SECRET.

EATHCOTE made rapid progress with his lessons, and the undivided attention of Mr. More was a great advantage to him.

Little Bellfield had a long trial of patience, for his mother, in her anxiety for his recovery, kept him very much to herself and Elsie.

Mr. More's visit morning and evening, with a short one from Heathcote every day, were the only relief to the monotony of the child's life.

One day early in December, when Heathcote reached the Grange, he found Mr. More with an open letter before him. He nodded his good-morning to Heathcote, who got his books in order, and then sat waiting for Mr. More to speak.

"I have had bad news, my boy. My sister's doctor says the only chance of her living through the winter is to go to the South of France. Just what I expected, and what I came here to provide

for. Well, I must get leave to go at once, and I can only hope it will be in time. Now then, turn to page 72," he said, and, with a great effort, Mr. More seemed to forget everything but the few lines of Smith's "Principia," which was Heathcote's first lesson.

No one would have thought that the tutor's heart was so heavy if they had been present in the Grange library that morning. Mrs. St. Aubyn came in once to look for a book Bellfield wanted, drawing her shawl closely round her and saying, "With such a bitter wind blowing no one can get well. I must really tell Randolph that as soon as it is safe to remove Bellfield, I shall leave the Grange. Randolph will be here to-morrow, Mr. More," Mrs. St. Aubyn added. "I daresay he has told you. Now, Heathcote, when you come up to see Harebell to-day, please be very careful to shut the red baize door before you open the other, and on no account, my dear, let him wash his slate again with the wet sponge, it is so likely to give him cold. How well you look, you little moor pony! No weather keeps you at home."

Heathcote gave his curly head a scarcely perceptible bend downwards, when Mrs. St. Aubyn laid her hand upon it, and seemed to be engrossed in looking for a word in the dictionary.

"You stay to dinner, I think, to-day."

After a few more remarks of this kind Mrs. St.

Aubyn went away, and in unbroken silence the morning's lessons were finished.

Heathcote would have liked to show some sympathy with Mr. More, but did not know how to do it. When he reached Bellfield's room he told him about the letter.

"He will go away, I expect," Heathcote said; "he is sure to go with his sister to France, he loves her so much."

"Go away!" exclaimed Harebell, his eyes dilating with that wistful expression which used to come before tears in former times, but the child had learned more self-control now. "Go away! Oh, he mustn't go! What shall I do? I must speak to Randolph about it. I do wish mamma would let me begin lessons again. I am quite well, and I am so sick of being here in these two rooms. Heathcote, I wish you would ask leave for me to come down-stairs."

"That would be no good," said Heathcote bluntly, "no good at all. I say! you've got the steamer, then," Heathcote said, springing forward to a box where a real steam yacht, which had been sent for to London, lay embedded in shavings and paper.

"Yes; do get it out. I don't think I care for it, for there is no water unless we could get the big bath. Elsie is down at her dinner. Could we haul the bath in, do you think?"

"Yes, but then where are the spirit and stuff to set it going?"

"Oh, in that box," said Bellfield; "everything is complete. If we could set it off on the lily pond it would be something; but not here!"

"The lily pond is all over ice, I expect. It was a hard frost last night. This is jolly," Heathcote said; "if only we could get water enough!"

The big bath was pulled into the room with a mighty haul by Heathcote, but the noise brought Elsie up before the yacht was launched.

"What mischief are you up to, Master Dalton? No, I am not going to have a room like that, I can tell you;" and Elsie, who had just gone through a trying time in fitting on a dress for Mrs. St. Aubyn, made a dash at the bath and began to tug it from the boy's grasp.

A struggle followed, but Elsie had no chance of victory, for Heathcote's strong arms were too much for her weak ones. Bellfield, excited and pleased to tease Elsie, added his mite of strength, and pulled and tugged also.

"I can hold it," Heathcote called out; "you run and get the big jug of water from the bedroom, and we'll fill the bath."

Bellfield obeyed, and returned with the big jug, spilling some water every step he took, and at last pouring a deluge over Elsie as he emptied it in the bath.

Elsie was now very angry, and, letting go her hold of the bath, flew off to call help.

So eager were the two boys in their desire to set off the "Spitfire," that Heathcote had got a match and had lighted the spirit which was to set the machinery in motion before footsteps were heard approaching, and Bellfield called out, "Quick, Heathcote! blow it out; draw the bath back."

But Heathcote went on with his operation, though his face was very red.

"It's no use stopping now," he said; "we are in for it." And then the door opened, and Elsie's high-pitched voice was heard, and Morris's low mutter.

Heathcote expected to see Mrs. St. Aubyn and Mr. More, and was relieved that it was only Morris who had come to Elsie's rescue.

"Come, come, young gentlemen, don't be so obstreperous," Morris said. "It isn't pleasant to be ducked like this," pointing to Elsie, "and a more dangerous thing than that boat I never saw. I wonder at Mr. St. Aubyn sending such an affair. And as to you dabbling in cold water, Master Bellfield, it is not to be thought of." And with one vigorous pull, Morris dragged off the bath, boat and all, into the next room.

"Mrs. St. Aubyn and Mr. More are particularly engaged, or you may depend they would have heard of this," Elsie exclaimed. "If Master Bellfield is ill

to-night, it's your fault, Master Heathcote. As to me catching rheumatic fever, that's of no account in your eyes, I know."

"I am awfully sorry you got splashed," Heathcote began.

"Splashed! drenched is the word," Elsie said.

"Well, go and change your gown," said Morris. "What's the good of lamentation? I'll put things to rights here. Poor thing!" Morris said as Elsie departed, "she has a hard life of it sometimes, I must say. I'm not going to tell tales, however. The bell will ring for luncheon directly, and I shall be bringing up your dinner in ten minutes, Master Bellfield."

"Why can't I come down?" Bellfield grumbled. "It is such a shame."

"Well, I don't see much hardship in staying in these rooms. It was a different thing when you were cooped up in London, in rooms where you could scarcely swing a cat," was Morris's final remark.

For several days after this Mrs. St. Aubyn was more than usually fidgety and restless. Mr. More and she had continual private conferences. She would call him out of the library; she would begin some remark at dinner and stop short.

"There's some secret and mystery, I know," Heathcote said to his mother one evening, "some-

thing that has to do with Mr. More, and I can't make out what it is."

Mrs. Dalton was writing a letter, and looking up, said—

"Be patient, Heathcote, and perhaps you will be rewarded."

Heathcote sprung to his feet.

"Then there is a secret, mother?"

"I did not say so. You jump at conclusions."

As he spoke there was a sound of the little garden gate opening and shutting, then a ring at the door-bell.

"It is eight o'clock, mother; who is it? and such a dark night too!"

Penelope's voice in the little narrow passage was heard speaking to some one, then Busy began to bark furiously, and rushed at a tall gentleman who stood behind Penelope. It was Mr. Randolph St. Aubyn.

"I thought I might venture to come at this late hour," he said, "then we could have a little talk alone. Well, my boy, you have not taught Busy manners yet," for Busy was growling in Heathcote's grasp.

"It's not you she is growling at," Heathcote said, "but she knows you are Patch's master, and she hates Patch."

Patch was a fox-terrier which Mr. St. Aubyn had brought down to the Grange on his last visit.

"It is a case of hate my dog hate me, then, is it? I remember now, Patch and Busy had a fight, and"——

"Busy got the best of it," Heathcote said, anxious for the honour of his dog; "much the best of it."

"Well done, Mrs. Busy!" Mr. St. Aubyn said. "I see she is a great favourite."

"Bellfield had one of her pups called Tiny," Heathcote went on, "but they managed to kill him at the Grange—stuffed him with meat and fat and things; and he had fits, and died in one."

"Killed with kindness! a most unsatisfactory sort of death. Well, now, I am going to talk to your mother."

"Put away your books, Heathcote," Mrs. Dalton said, "and say good-night, and call Penelope to make some coffee and send it in."

Heathcote obeyed, and rushed with his message into the kitchen.

"I believe Mr. St. Aubyn is come about 'the secret,'" he said, "for there is a secret, and it has something to do with me, I am certain."

"Secret! fiddlesticks!" ejaculated Penelope. "Now, if I am to make a good strong cup of coffee, you mustn't meddle and make here, Master Heathcote. I have got some thin biscuits baked, which is lucky; there's nothing eats so well with coffee as thin biscuits. Though I did say to myself I would

make no more if your mamma was going to live on them. She eats no more than would support a fly, and that's the truth. When you dine at the Grange, she sits and pecks and pecks, and eats nothing. But you just go to bed, and don't tell your mamma I remarked on her appetite; though to be sure it is a good thing she has got me to consider her a bit, for she never considers herself."

Heathcote took his candle and went up to his room with a sort of undefined pain at his heart, caused by Penelope's words. Did he never "consider his mother"? Was he selfish, and thinking only of his own pleasure? When his mother came to say good-night and kiss him an hour later, she was surprised to see the long curled lashes were wet with recent tears—an unwonted sight! She kissed the fair smooth brow and stroked back the mass of tangled curls. "Mother!" Heathcote murmured, and then turned and was asleep again in an instant.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WREN'S NEST.



HE next day passed, and the next, and yet there was nothing said about the secret. Mrs. Dalton came up to the Grange, and when Heathcote went in to luncheon, he saw, to his surprise, his mother was there.

"So odd that she did not tell me she was coming," Heathcote thought. Then, as he walked home with her, she was unusually silent, and, when they reached the cottage, went down to the Rectory without him.

"Shall I come, mother?" he asked.

"No, dear, not to-day. Suppose you run up to the farm and see little Mary, and take her the last new number of 'Little Folks;' and as you pass old Grannie Evans' cottage, leave the little pot of black-currant jam Penelope has got ready for her, and tell her to put a teaspoonful into a mug of boiling water, and it will relieve her cough."

"I had sooner come with you, mother," Heathcote

said, kicking the small stones on the road with his feet. "Let me come, mother,—do."

"No, Heathcote, I cannot. I want to speak to the Rector on business."

Heathcote turned back to look for the December number of "Little Folks." He was setting out with it when he remembered the jelly for old Mrs. Evans. "Bother it!" he exclaimed; "I dare-say she can wait till to-morrow, or Penelope can take it. Mother has nothing but secrets now, first with Mrs. St. Aubyn, then with the Rector, then with Mr. St. Aubyn. I hate secrets. I like to know everything. And Mr. More won't say a word; he is not half so jolly as he was. Then these short days are such a bother,—one can do nothing,—it is dark by four o'clock."

Heathcote's meditations were interrupted by Sam leaping over a hedge and coming down with a thump that set Busy off into a paroxysm of barking.

"Beg your pardon, Master Heathcote, for startling you like this, but I thought you'd like to peep into a nest I've found."

"A nest! at this time of year? Sam, what nonsense!"

"Will you come and look—down this lane? It's the nest of a wren; I never saw one more perfect. But mind your footsteps, sir, and keep Busy back,—the wren is a shy little thing. As I came by this

morning there he was, sitting at the door of his nest, just where the sun caught the hedge, singing with all his might. He's gone now for a look-out for worms before dark, and if you bend down you'll see a lump of 'em all crowded together, their eyes like little beads. Hush, sir! now look." And Sam knelt down, and gently parting some withered boughs of the bryony, he pointed to a hole in the brown bank, and then leaning aside, he let Heathcote take a peep. There, indeed, was the "lump of 'em" packed close and warm together in the cosy hole, fearing nothing in their snug home, watched over by the same loving Eye which cares for the birds as for the children.

"That's how they live, cuddled together till the spring. It ain't very common in these parts to see them, but the young gentleman up at the Grange told me I should spy one out in a quiet corner."

Heathcote was delighted; he forgot all about the secret, and the pot of jelly and his vexation, and as Sam gently replaced the withered dried tangle of bryony, he drew a deep breath.

"Wonderful! dear little things! how mother would like to see them!"

"The gentleman says, sir," said Sam, "that in a very sharp frost the poor little things are sometimes found dead, froze together in a heap; but let's hope



"Sam knelt down, and pointed to a hole in the brown bank."—
Page 158.

these will see the spring. Are you coming up to our place, sir?"

"Oh, yes!" Heathcote answered, "to be sure I am. I think I'll write a letter to 'Little Folks' and tell about the wrens. There! I do believe that is the cock wren coming home," as a little dark object flying very low whisked past.

"Yes, that's he; he'll be singing an evening-song before he goes to bed. You hark, sir."

The boys stood still. Heathcote holding Busy with a tight grasp, and then in the clear air of the December afternoon there rose a loud sweet song from the little master of the home in the hedge.

"Just as if he was singing a hymn," said Heathcote. "I shall come and look at the nest again tomorrow."

"Better not come too often, sir; birds are shy creatures, and they don't like being watched too much."

"Oh, very well! I'll take care. Now I have to take the magazine to your sister."

"I am glad of that, sir. Poor little thing! she has been very dull all day, for in winter she can't get out, and it so soon gets dark in the kitchen. Besides, she did hear tell that all the family was leaving the Grange for the winter, and"—Sam hesitated—"and, what's worse, that you and your mamma were leaving too."

Heathcote's face grew very red, and he said—

"What stuff! as if we were likely to go away. It's not true; who said it?"

"Well, it came through Mrs. St. Aubyn's maid. It's no business of mine," Sam said, "to go and repeat it. And as to the first part of the news, it's no odds to me whether the Grange is empty or full; but as to the thoughts of your going off, I can't bear to think of it, and that's the truth, Master Heathcote."

Heathcote began to whistle and sing snatches of songs. He was unwilling to think Sam should have been before him in finding out the secret. For putting all Mrs. St. Aubyn's words together, and making a patchwork of them and Mr. More's, Heathcote felt sure there was some truth in Sam's story.

Little Mary, sitting patiently and gently by the wide hearth in the farm kitchen, brightened up at the sight of Heathcote.

She had had a great deal of pain since the cold weather set in, and her sweet eyes had a very pathetic look in them. But in spite of the pain Mary was very happy, and her first words to Heathcote were—

"I have got good news, Master Heathcote. Mother is going to take Bessie Curtis into the house to help her with the work through the winter, and if she is a good girl she is to stay. Isn't that nice?"

"Susie is the one with the big black eyes; isn't she the worst of the lot?" Heathcote exclaimed.

"She is going to be good now," Mary said confidently; "and I have made father promise he will let her come. That was the hard part; but father never *can* say no when I ask him. It is so kind of father!"

It was indeed quite true. Farmer Forster was unable to refuse his little Mary anything; and no proof of love could have been greater than this of allowing Susie Curtis to come into his house.

"Can't think, child, what you want that black-eyed gipsy about the place for. I expect it was she who pushed you down the rocks."

Mary blushed crimson at this and said—

"If it was Susie, father, that's why I should be kind to her, don't you know?"

"No, I don't," her father said; "it seems to me a reason for having nothing to do with the whole lot—a bad lot, as I always say."

"But think of Bob, father. You said Bob would never come to any good, and he has got his wages rose at the Rectory, and Mrs. Dalton says he is a real good boy now. You see, father, if I was well and could bustle about, I should help mother by this time and spare her; but as I can't do this, I should like to have Susie Curtis, and she is very, very fond of me."

"Nonsense, my dear! And if she is, what's the love of one of them Curtis's to be pleased about?"

"I am pleased," the child said, "because she has had so many hard, cross words spoken to her all her life, and now she won't have any more, at least not such very cross ones, if she is a good girl."

"Well, well, take your own way, my little one," the farmer had said, kissing the little face which nestled against his shoulder, and adding, "Only let me hear no more about the Curtis lot, and if she behaves ill she will be sent packing."

Little Mary was insensibly gaining more hold on her father than she knew herself, and her words, "That is the reason why I should be kind to her," struck him with fresh power every time he realised them. Unconsciously this child was preaching the gospel of love and forgiveness by her sweet unselfishness and patience. From the moment that Mary had grasped the reality of the love of Jesus, who loved even unto death those who had scorned and crucified Him, she felt a longing to follow where His pierced Hand pointed the way.

It was Susie Curtis who had always been rough and unkind to Mary; it was her hand that had given the push which had caused the fall down the Elf Stairs, but only Mary and Susie knew this with any certainty. Bob had been won first, as we know, and then after that night on the moor, when Bob had

trudged so determinedly along to assist in the search for the lost children, Farmer Forster had been less bitter against him. The next step was for Bob to bring Susie up to see Mary, and when once she had found her way up to the farm, there was scarcely a day that she did not come with some fine blackberries, or a fern, or some trifle that she thought would please Mary. No one really knew what had passed between the children on the day when Susie had been found sobbing on the window-seat, her face hidden on Mary's shoulder. Mrs. Forster coming in, had found her thus, but when Susie had slipped down and disappeared, Mary had said, "Susie will be a good girl now, mother; and don't ask what is the matter with her. *Don't* ask, please, mother." And if Mrs. Forster guessed what had passed between the children, she never made any remarks about it, but from that day she was kinder in her manner to Susie Curtis, and had consented, if her husband would allow it, to take her for a little servant through the winter.

Heathcote reached the cottage before his mother had returned, and when she came in she found him engrossed with writing the story of the Wren's Nest for "Little Folks."

Grannie Evans and the black-currant jelly had gone quite out of his head.

"I say, mother," he began at once, "did you ever

see a lot of little wrens cuddled together in a hole in the bank? It's an awfully pretty sight. And, mother, Susie Curtis is going to be a servant at the farm; isn't that kind of the Forsters?"

Mrs. Dalton had sunk down in her chair by the fire, by the light of which Heathcote was trying to write.

"I must get Penelope to bring the lamp," he said. And as he started up he saw on the sideboard the pot of black-currant jelly. "Oh, I say, mother, I never took that jelly. I'll run now, may I? I shall not be ten minutes."

His mother said, "Yes, dear," absently, in a tone very unlike her usual one.

"Are you not well, mother?" Heathcote asked quickly.

"I am tired, Heathcote. Make haste with poor Grannie Evans' jelly, and then come and sit quietly with me; I have something to tell you."

CHAPTER XVIII.

PARTINGS.



OW will you like the idea of a long journey?" Mrs. Dalton asked, when Heathcote returned from Grannie Evans'.

"A long journey! Oh, very much—jolly, delightful, mother! Where are we to go, and when? Do tell me, mother."

"You must be patient, Heathcote, and I will tell you the whole story—the secret, which has been, more or less, in every one's thoughts during the last week. Mr. Randolph St. Aubyn has proposed that you and I should join Mrs. St. Aubyn and Bellfield, Mr. More and Miss Egerton, and all live together for six months in a villa at Mentone."

"Where is Mentone?"

"In the south of France; it belonged to Italy till a few years ago. It is very warm in the winter; sunshine and soft sea-air make it a very good place for invalids. Mrs. St. Aubyn is advised by the doctors to take Bellfield there, and as Mr. More and

his sister were to go, the idea of joining them seemed a good one. Then little Bellfield is so fond of you, and begs not to be separated from you; so I have consented to the plan, and we are all to start this day week. You know I have lost some of my income, and as you and I are invited as guests to the Villa St. Jeanne, I feel that I ought to accept the offer. I have taken counsel about it, and I think I am doing right. Mr. Parker advises me to go, and so does Mr. Bayliss. The change may help to keep off the bad cough I had last spring, and put a little strength into me."

"And Penelope and Busy, will they come too?"

"No, indeed. Poor Penelope and Busy must take care of each other. The curate, who is coming in January to help Mr. Parker with the services, is to take the cottage till June. And for the next few days I shall be very busy with arrangements, in which you must help me."

That night, when Heathcote went to bed, he had the strange conflict of feeling which we all experience in any great change in our lives. Children, as well as grown-up people, can understand that in Heathcote's heart there was a mingling of pleasure and pain.

When he went into the kitchen as usual, before going up to bed, he found Penelope with her arms folded, staring into the fire.

"Is it not splendid, Penny, for us to go to France and see the real blue Mediterranean, and I have read that in warm nights the air is thick with fireflies—real fireflies. Penny, would you not like to see them?"

Penelope did not speak, her heart was too full.

"Penny, you will take care of dear Busy and Bianca, and *will* you clean out the aquarium once a week, Penny? Penny!" Heathcote said, putting his arm on her shoulder. "Penny, why don't you speak?"

"Speak! I am broken-hearted," Penelope burst forth; "your poor mamma dragged off to foreign parts just to please a spoilt child, just to suit a fine lady's whim. Oh, I can't bear to think of it, and that's the truth. She ain't strong, though she is that active that no one thinks about it; but I tell you she is not strong, and she'll miss her home comforts," and here Penelope quite broke down into sobs, "and she'll miss me, though I say it, that shouldn't say it."

"O Penny! don't cry," said Heathcote; "it is horrid to leave you," and the boy bent down and kissed his old friend. "I'll ask Mrs. St. Aubyn that you may come too. Shall I?"

"No, no, my dear; that would never do, no, no! I must stay at home and look after things here. I know my place and my duty. I hope, I am sure, no harm may come of it all; but there! we know your dear mamma always does right, and as she thinks it

best to go, I have nothing to say. Why, there's the clock striking nine; you ought to be in bed."

Heathcote lay awake thinking for what was to him an immense time. It was not really an hour, but to a child accustomed to fall asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow, it seemed a very long time indeed.

Penelope's words had set his thoughts in another direction.

The delight of crossing the Channel in a steamer, the new things which would meet him at every turn, the expeditions on donkeys up the mountains of which his mother had spoken, faded, and there were instead the image of Penelope, alone and sorrowful; Sam Forster, finding treasures, and missing the pleasure of sharing them with him; little Mary, too, how dull she would be without his mother; and Busy—poor Busy!—she would pine and mourn every day. Perhaps he should never see Busy again, or the Cottage, or the tors, perhaps he would never come back. Mr. Parker's daughter, Lucy, never came back, he wished he were not going. He would ask his mother to change her mind and tell Mrs. St. Aubyn she did not wish to go to France. He would really ask her. And at this point Heathcote fell into dreams, where was a confused medley of ships and toy-steamers, and Elsie and he were tugging at a gigantic bath, and then all was lost in deep and profound slumber.

Bellfield had none of Heathcote's misgivings, no old ties to break, no friends to leave. His joy at the proposal was unmixed. He was rather disappointed the next day, when he came running to meet Heathcote, to find he was not in the same delight as himself.

"I am packing up," he said. "I have made mamma say I may have this black box all to myself, and there will be room for your things too, Heathcote. Look here! I have got the yacht in, and the butterfly case, and the parlour croquet, and the great —Are you not pleased to go, Heathcote?" he exclaimed. "I thought you would like it, and I should have been so miserable without *you*."

"Oh, well," Heathcote replied, "I am glad to go, though I am sorry too. There are so many things to leave behind."

"But I'll take them in my box," Bellfield said. "It is not half full."

"You can't take Penelope, nor Busy, nor Sam Forster, I suppose," Heathcote said, laughing. "And I don't believe you will want half those things out there. I would not take them, if I were you."

Bellfield looked disappointed, and said with a sigh—

"I thought you would care for some of them; but there is the bell. We will look out what you wish most for after dinner, and we will leave the rest behind."

Elsie now came with a large shawl, which was put round Bellfield when he left the room where he had been a prisoner for so many weeks.

Bellfield disliked to have this shawl put on him, especially when Heathcote was present, but he bore it very good-temperedly, and said as he ran downstairs—

“I shall not want a shawl when we get to Mentone, Miss Elsie; no more coddling then.”

“Get to Mentone, indeed!” said Elsie. “I see no chance of getting there this side Christmas. I am nearly worn out, and that’s the truth.”

Indeed, for the next two days no one at the Cottage or the Grange had an easy time of it. Mr. More had gone to London to help his sister to get ready for the journey, and Morris and Elsie had all the preparations to make. At the Cottage there were preparations also, but Mrs. Dalton packed her own large box and Heathcote’s small one with little trouble. Her thoughts were not for herself or her journey, but for others. There were all the arrangements to make about her classes and her club, her sick people and her boys and girls, who wanted a word now and then of reproof, or a smile of approval. Amongst them were Bob Curtis and his sister Susie.

Bob had done well at the Rectory, but there were many little idle habits yet left to conquer, and Mrs. Dalton’s eye was quick to find them out.

Once, for instance, the basket with the bread from the farm was set down by Bob at the corner of the road, while he and one of his old companions had a game with short sticks and a ball, over which they were so interested that a donkey, who was tied to a log, and browsed in the hedge, came up unperceived, turned the basket topsyturvy with his nose, and set one clumsy foot into a little basin of eggs which were also in the basket.

Peals of laughter broke from Bob's friend, who said—

“Chuck the basin into the hedge, and say there was no eggs in the basket.”

Bob hesitated. A few months ago and he would have instantly done this, but now a better principle was at work within him.

“I shan't tell no lies,” he said, as he picked up the broken bits of basin and wiped the smashed eggs from the loaf of bread, and then went off with his basket, stopping at the Cottage to tell Mrs. Dalton what had happened.

This was a proof of his confidence in her as his friend; and though she did not make light of his fault, telling him to waste Mr. Parker's time was like wasting his property, she praised him for resisting any temptation to hide what had happened, and promised to tell the Rector how sorry he was.

Such a friend as Mrs. Dalton could not be

replaced; and she was worn out with good-byes and regrets at her departure. Then she went up to the farm to say the saddest good-bye of all.

It was a cold, bright winter afternoon, and a large fire was blazing on the wide hearth when Mrs. Dalton opened the door and went in.

Mary was seated in her usual place, and by her side was Susie Curtis, whom she was teaching to darn a stocking. How wooden and stiff her fingers were I cannot tell you, how the long darning-needle pricked them, and how it seemed impossible for her to pick up the alternate stitches.

"I shall never do it," she said with a hopeless sigh, as Mrs. Dalton entered; then catching sight of her, she twitched the stocking off her hand and went into the back-kitchen, where Mrs. Forster was at her work.

"A troublesome pupil, Mary!"

Mary laughed. "She gets on far better with mother, ma'am, than with me. Mother finds her handy and sharp. I don't think she ever will be quick with her needle. Just look at that darn, ma'am; it's only a cobble."

"But you are happy, and love Susie, Mary?"

"Oh yes, ma'am, very happy, and she does love me. And now, you are going away!" Mary's voice trembled.

"I shall write to you, my child, and think of you;

and you know, whether absent or present, we can meet in prayer. You must pray for me and Master Heathcote, Mary."

Mary held Mrs. Dalton's hand tight between hers and kissed it.

"Then there is my good Penelope, she will come and see you, and you will cheer her a little, Mary. And there is poor Busy. Master Heathcote feels so sorry to leave poor Busy. So you must invite her to spend a day here sometimes. Now Jack sleeps nearly all day, you will be glad of Busy for a companion." And as she spoke Busy's familiar rush at the door was heard, and in came Heathcote, rosy, and bright, and merry, to say his good-byes at the farm.

"We will come back with the swallows, Mary," he said, "we shall be so glad to get back." These were almost Heathcote's last words, and Farmer Forster, who had come in with Sam and his wife to say good-bye, gave a great sigh.

"She'll be beyond the flight of the swallows before you come back, Master Heathcote," he said, as they all walked down the garden together. "She is ready for heaven, and I don't say I would keep her back if I could. I have done all she asked me, ma'am, and put up with that little black-eyed mischief for her sake."


"I know you have, Mr. Forster, and I think you

will have your reward; and even the little black-eyed mischief may be a comfort to you some day."

Then, with a warm pressure of the hand, Mrs. Dalton turned away with Heathcote to walk to their little home in the village for the last time for many months.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FIRST DAY'S JOURNEY.

T was in the dim light of the December morning that Heathcote caught a last glimpse of Penelope, with Busy struggling in her arms, of Sam Forster and Bob Curtis, and of several neighbours who had come to see the last of him and his mother. Poor Sam's wonted smile was but a melancholy attempt, and Penelope hid her face in Busy's rough coat. Heathcote was surprised that his own eyes were dim with tears, and he had to stand staring blankly out of the window that he might brush them off unseen. Mrs. St. Aubyn was so much engrossed with cushions and wraps, that she had no time to observe Heathcote, and Bellfield, with the quick understanding of a sensitive nature, let Heathcote stand by the window without saying a word.

Then came the change at Newton, and the hurry and bustle, and Morris and Elsie doing their best to carry the amount of small packages which were

heaped up on the seat of the carriage. Heathcote's spirit revived, and he nodded and smiled at his mother as he took her bag in his hand, saying—

“I'm your footman, mother.”

A long journey was a novelty to him, and he was incessantly interested all the way to London, which they reached when the lurid gleam of sunset, through the mist and smoke, was colouring the stately towers of the Houses of Parliament and the heavy pile of Westminster Abbey.

“There's Mr. More and Randolph,” Bellfield called out, as the train glided into the Paddington Station.

“Oh, we are so tired, Randolph!”

“Tired! why this is only the first step of the journey; you must not be tired till this day week; then you may go to sleep for a month if you like.”

“Make haste! make haste to a fly. I hope you have got a roomy carriage, Randolph. Oh, my dear child, where is your respirator!”

Mrs. St. Aubyn followed Mr. St. Aubyn, dragging Bellfield after her, and Mrs. Dalton and Heathcote were left to Mr. More.

“Morris and Elsie can manage the luggage, I suppose. What an immense pile! Which is yours?”

“That big black box and the little brown one,” Heathcote said promptly. “Mother” — But Heathcote's speech was cut short by a porter, who called to him to “look out,” as he was shouldering a

heavy portmanteau. At last, in much noise and confusion, and shouting of cabmen and struggling of horses, Heathcote and Mrs. Dalton were put into a cab, and Mr. More jumped in after them, saying—

“Charing Cross Hotel!”

“Shall we find Miss Egerton there?”

“No,” Mr. More said, “she is at the house of an aunt of hers, and I am to bring her to join the party in the morning.”

“What a party it is! I wish mother, and you, and I, and Miss Egerton were going by ourselves, with Bellfield.”

“Come, Heather, don’t get into the wishing strain; it is lucky for some of us that we are going at all.”

“What heaps of carriages, and what a noise!” said Heathcote; “and how dark it is, and what a lot of lamps! O mother! you never said London was as big as this.”

Surprise after surprise followed when they arrived at the large hotel, where everything seemed to go by machinery. What a delight it was to Heathcote to go up in the “moving room,” as he called the lift, and find himself high above the noisy square below; and to look out of the window and see the Cross, which brings to mind King Edward’s Chère Reine to those who think; though to those who do not think, Charing Cross is but an odd-sounding name, suggesting

Mr. More said, the occupation of a large proportion of respectable old women who go out "charing!"

Then there was the church tower just opposite, keeping watch over the brilliantly lighted square and the ceaseless traffic of the great city—a silent reminder, as it seemed, of the higher life above this struggling, restless throng, and of that Great Love which has the dense crowds of the city and the lonely moor in its holy keeping.

Heathcote felt as if he could never come away from the window, and while Mrs. Dalton was making preparations for the night in the next room, which opened out of his, he took in with his quick sight what was going on below—a child seated on the steps of the Cross—a policeman roughly taking him by the shoulder and pushing him on—a woman with a baby in her arms shuffling behind—boys with papers to sell with their shrill cry—horses pulled up short on their hind-legs as hansom after hansom rattled into the station.

At last, with a sigh, the boy turned away as Bellfield came dancing in to say they were to go down to tea with Mrs. Dalton.

"In the 'moving room' again?" Heathcote said. "Oh, that will be jolly!"

Just as the two boys were starting, Elsie came flying down the long passage—

"Your shawl, your wrap, Master Bellfield!" and

Bellfield saw the man who was in the lift was laughing.

"It is too bad! I *won't* put it on! It's a shame!"

But Mrs. Dalton quietly wrapped the shawl round the child, saying—

"It would be a pity to catch cold before we are fairly off, Bellfield," and then he obeyed at once.

The boys and Mrs. Dalton had their tea at a little table together. Mrs. St. Aubyn dined in her room. At first Heathcote could eat nothing, he was so busy watching the groups at the other tables in the large dining-hall. Two little girls with a lady were their nearest neighbours. One of the little girls was dark, the other fair. They were dressed exactly alike in blue serge frocks with crimson trimming, and they were precisely the same height and size. The little girl with the fair hair began to laugh and smile at Heathcote, but the one with the dark hair was grave and quiet.

"Heathcote, my dear boy, go on with your tea," his mother said.

"Mother, do you see those little girls; they must be twins," he said in a low voice.

"Aren't they pretty little girls?" Bellfield now whispered.

Mrs. Dalton leaned forward and said—

"It is not right to make comments on others in public, boys; let us talk of *things*, not people."

"Very well," said Heathcote good-temperedly, "let's talk about the lift. Isn't it nice to go up, up, up, and stop at the right place, and to come down, down, down so easily? I don't know which I like best. May we go up in it after tea, mother?"

"Certainly, and I think the sooner the better, for you little boys have a long day before you to-morrow, and another early start."

"When shall we see Miss Egerton?" Heathcote asked. "I hope she will be jolly, and not mind things—draughts, and noise, and all that."

"Invalids are obliged to mind things, Heathcote. You are so hardy and strong, you must take care you do not get inconsiderate or forgetful of other people's aches and pains."

To the boys' great delight, when they got to the lift, or the "moving room," as Bellfield liked best to call it, the two little girls were seated in it, holding each other's hands, as if to inspire each other with confidence. The lady who was with them proposed walking upstairs, and when the man who superintended the lift invited her to come in, she shook her head, and said she would not enter one on any account.

"Grandpapa says it is quite safe, auntie," one of the children cried; "do come!" But the spring was touched which set the lift in motion, and the lady vanished out of sight.

The four children got out together, followed by Mrs. Dalton.

"Good-night," Heathcote said. "Are you going to Paris to-morrow, I wonder?"

"Yes, and a great deal farther."

"Where?" asked Bellfield.

"We are going with grandpapa to Mentone," the dark-haired little girl said, "because Aunt Ella is"——

But catching sight of the lady they called "auntie," they danced off to the top of the stairs to greet her.

"Dear little things!" Mrs. Dalton said, "perhaps we may see more of them to-morrow. Now, Bellfield, I must leave you at the door of your mamma's room and say good-night."

"I don't feel the least sleepy," Bellfield said.

"No, and I am sure I don't," said Heathcote; "it is nonsense going to bed."

But nevertheless, before the clocks of the great city had announced from every belfry tower that it was eight o'clock, both little boys were sound asleep.

CHAPTER XX.

PARIS.



THE journey the next day was not so delightful as Heathcote expected. The rain fell so heavily that he could not be allowed to stay on the deck of the steamer, and the rough sea made every one, including his mother, very ill. When at last they put into Boulogne harbour, almost every one was tired and cross.

Travelling is a test of temper, or rather of the way in which temper can be controlled.

I do not suppose that Mrs. Dalton liked all the discomforts of that journey any better than the others of her party, but she did not give way to "fumes and fusses," as Heathcote called them, and was quiet and patient. Mr. More's attention was directed to his sister, who had been very ill on the steamer, and he had almost to carry her up the pier to the railway. Mrs. St. Aubyn was also very miserable, and Mr. Randolph St. Aubyn had to support her, while Morris carried Bellfield with one arm, and bags

and wraps with the other; while poor Elsie—poor much-enduring Elsie!—came panting behind with wraps and cushions.

Then came the long monotonous railway journey through the flattest part of the North of France.

Heathcote, who had secured a place next a window, looked in vain for any object of interest. Desolate châteaux and scattered villages loomed through the cold drizzling rain; and his mother watched his eyes grow heavy with great satisfaction, till sleep overcame him, and laying his head on her shoulder, he forgot everything in dreams, in which Busy, and Bianca, and Penelope all figured in a confused way.

Bellfield was restless and fidgety, his mother full of frets and complaints, and Miss Egerton lay back in her corner, unable to speak and hardly to move.

The travellers reached Paris about half-past six, and here a commissionaire from the hotel met them, who took the whole responsibility of the luggage upon himself, and sent them off in cabs to the Hôtel Meurice in the Rue de Rivoli. Here the boys woke up to some enjoyment. The brightly lighted streets along which they drove had a festive look, even on a dull December evening; and when they drove into the courtyard of Meurice's Hôtel, and were taken to their comfortable rooms in another and more

beautiful lift lined with red velvet, the children forgot their tiredness, and their crossness vanished.

Mrs. St. Aubyn had ordered a private sitting-room on the fourth floor; and there were the gardens of the Tuilleries in front, and the lamps of the long street twinkling in close lines on either side of it right and left, like a street in "The Arabian Nights," Bellfield said.

Three days were spent pleasantly in Paris. Mr. More took the boys to see some of the wonders of the beautiful city, the capital of the country where so many great events have happened. Mr. More told them of the dreadful times of revolution and disorder, and the children looked with wonder at the ruined palace of the old kings of France, a sad monument of the last tumultuous days of 1870. Then they saw the tomb of Napoleon I. in l'Hôpital des Invalides, the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and the treasures collected there, and the long galleries of the Louvre, with its miles of pictures; and one bright spring-like morning Mr. More, and Miss Egerton, and Mrs. Dalton drove up the Champs Elysées to the Bois de Boulogne, with its grassy slopes and pretty dairy and farm-house.

To Heathcote's country-born eyes the dairy seemed like a sham. "Indeed," he said, "I think all Paris is full of shams. The people can't be as happy as they pretend to be, with so many losses, and a

battered Palace standing in the middle of all the grand streets. They ought to make haste and build that up again."

Mr. More could not help laughing at these philosophical reflections, and Heathcote was not quite sure whether to be pleased at the laugh or offended.

Sunday did not seem a bit like Sunday to these English children; and as they walked with Mr. More to the English service, they were bewildered and astonished. Shops open, buying and selling, pleasure and traffic, all just the same as on other days.

"How tired the people must be with no Sunday!" Heathcote said to his mother that afternoon, as he was seated with her by the window of her bedroom, which faced the street. "I am sure even the horses at home know it is Sunday, and that they have got a good resting-day."

"Yes," Mrs. Dalton said; "it is quite in vain to try to alter God's wise laws, for to rest 'one day in seven' is His law for us, and we can't break it without hurting ourselves."

"Is it wicked of these people to break it, mother? I can't understand."

"It is too difficult a question for you to answer, my dear child, and, indeed, for many older and wiser people also; but this you may be sure of, that now in childhood, and in after life also, you will never forget to observe God's day without some harm

to yourself first, and perhaps to others through you. Sunday is the golden pivot on which all the other days turn, and if you try to do without it, you will find disorder and weariness, instead of order and peace."

"Mother, what do you think of Miss Egerton? She is not a bit like the pictures of her in the library at the Grange; she is so pale and dull?"

"She is ill, Heathcote, and tired. I shall be glad when she is safely at Mentone, and I am sure Mr. More will be glad too."

"Heathcote!" and a gentle tap at the door was followed by the thrusting in of a little fair head. "May I come in?"

"Oh yes, Bellfield, come in, and perhaps mother will tell us a story."

"Will you, Mrs. Dalton, please?"

Both little boys seated themselves in the window-seat, and had just settled to listen, when again a gentle knock, and this time it was Miss Egerton.

Mrs. Dalton rose to welcome her, put her comfortably in the deep arm-chair, threw another log on the fire, and wrapped her shawl more closely round her.

"The children don't know me," she said with a smile; "I have seen so little of you all; but I shall be glad to make friends. I have been so ill since the day we crossed, that I thought it better to keep out of the way till I was able to make myself more agreeable."

And now there was another interruption. Elsie came to say Mrs. St. Aubyn wished to see Mrs. Dalton, if she would go into the sitting-room.

"Heathcote and Bellfield, stay where you are," Mrs. Dalton said, as the little boys slipped down from their perch as if to follow her. "Stay with Miss Egerton, and make friends with her," she added, as she closed the door.

"I do not think you want to make friends," Miss Egerton said, as Heathcote went back to his place in the window to look down on busy, gay, unresting Paris, and Bellfield sat down cross-legged by the cheerful blaze of the wood fire.

As this remark met with neither contradiction nor assent, Miss Egerton was silent for a few minutes, and so were the boys. Bellfield was taking a stealthy peep at her from under his long lashes, but Heathcote never turned his head from the window.

"We are going off on our journey again to-morrow," Miss Egerton said at last; "have you liked these three days in Paris?"

"Yes," Bellfield said. "I like the Bois and the dear little goats, but Heathcote does not. Do you, Heathcote?"

Heathcote said "No," but that was all.

"I have seen nothing of Paris," Miss Egerton said, "for my room looks out on the quadrangle, and I see nothing from my window but a number of

other windows all like it. But I have had a nice quiet time, and feel ready for my journey to-morrow, especially as there is no sea to cross. It will be a long journey, but we shall sleep most of the way if we are wise."

"Have you ever been a long journey before?" Bellfield asked.

"Yes, one very long one."

"All alone?"

"No, with your tutor, Mr. More. He is Mr. More to you, but he is Reginald to me."

And then as she spoke Miss Egerton's face flushed with light—the light of love and tenderness—just the sort of light Heathcote had seen many a time in his mother's face. It is a pity he still kept his back to the room and his face towards the window, for he missed it, and missed too the gentle touch of the hand which was laid on Bellfield's shoulder.

"Yes, it was a very long journey. Would you like to hear about it?"

"Very much," Bellfield said, drawing closer, "very much. Won't you, Heather?"

A sound which might be "Yes" came from the window-seat, and Miss Egerton began.

"My journey was from that island you see on the map lying close to the great peninsula we call India."

"Ceylon," said Bellfield promptly.

"Yes, Ceylon. I lived there with my mother and stepfather, and there little Reg was born."

"Mr. More!" exclaimed Bellfield. "How funny to think of him as little Reg!"

"A great sorrow came to us, for Reg's father, Mr. More, who had a large plantation of coffee, died, and a few weeks after, just as my mother had made arrangements to return to England, she also died, and we were left orphans. I was then just sixteen and Reginald four."

"Why, you must be very old now then," said Bellfield.

"Twelve years added to twenty-three," said Miss Egerton with a smile. "From that day Reg has been everything to me. I came this very long journey with him alone, for we were then, as we are now, very poor. He was the bravest little fellow, and full of fun and spirit."

"I wish I could have seen him," Bellfield exclaimed.

"When we got on board the ship, he was lying wide awake in his berth above mine, and he called me to say—

"'If we sail on and on, Sissy, shall we get at last to heaven, where mother is gone, for nurse said she was gone a long way off?'

"A lady near us was very much struck with this when she heard Reg say it, and she exclaimed—

“Oh, poor little boy! has he lost his mother?”

“Then Reg sat up in his bed and said solemnly—

“No, mother is not lost, nor father either. Sissy and I know where they are, and we are going to them some day.”

“That is a nice story of Mr. More,” Bellfield said. “Do tell something else.”


“Yes, I will tell you what happened on board the ship, unless Reginald has already told you about the tiger. Has he?”

“No,” said Heathcote, at last attracted from his seat to the fire. “No, he has never told me about a tiger, nor anything about the voyage, though I knew he had come from Ceylon with you when he was a little boy.”

“Too young to remember the things I remember,” said Miss Egerton; “and yet I have heard him say he could recall some part of this story of the tiger as if he had seen it, and some part as if he had only heard it or read it.”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STORY OF THE TIGER.

 HERE were a great many passengers on board our ship, and amongst them a very pale, delicate lady, with a little girl. She was a very pretty little girl, and used to play with Reginald on the deck a great deal. She was about seven years old, and looked upon him as a baby in comparison with herself. At one end of the vessel there were some animals that were being brought to England to the Zoological Gardens—a panther and a leopard, with its beautiful black spots and bright eyes, and a very fine tiger. Of course these animals were safely confined in a strong iron cage with bars. There was a movable shutter across the front of the cage, which was drawn back every morning by the keeper who was in charge of the animals.

I remember I used to look at them with admiration and pity. They seemed to take their imprisonment so patiently, and how hard it must have been for them to be shut up in that narrow place instead

of leaping and bounding in their native forests and through the tall jungle, with the soft breeze whispering through the long leaves, as they lay amongst them shadowed from the burning sun.

It was one of our morning expeditions to visit the tiger, and Amy, for that was the little girl's name, would hold my hand tightly in hers as we paid our respects to the noble creatures, while Reginald would say, "Good morning, tigers!"—they were all tigers to him—and then try to count the spots on the leopard's back.

One day the keeper was ill, and the shutter was not raised from the cage. No one else liked to do it perhaps, if they thought of it, but certain it is the shutter was not lifted for two days. A great roaring and growling attracted the attention of one of the officers of the ship on the morning of the second day, and the keeper came out of his bed to look after the animals. The moment the shutter was raised, it was noticed that the tiger's eyes were unusually fierce; "she was in the sulks," the keeper said as he opened the trap-door, that no one but himself ever touched, and gave the three prisoners their food. He watched the tiger for a moment or two before he went back to his berth.

"Yes," he said, "she is in the sulks; I would not care to come too near her to-day."

About an hour after, little Amy, who always took

a great interest in the animals, went to see, as she said, if the tiger was still in "the sulks." She was lying close to the bars, and had not touched her portion of the food, though neither the leopard nor the panther dare touch it either. What followed, none of us could really tell, but piercing shrieks brought every one to the spot, when, to our horror, we saw the tiger had sprung upon poor little Amy, and had seized her fast with one huge paw, drawing her between the lower bars of the cage, which were wider apart than the others, and had set his teeth in her ear. You may imagine what was the awful distress of Amy's poor mother.

The keeper came rushing up and said—

"If you attempt to move her, her head will be torn to pieces."

The poor little girl had mercifully fainted and lay senseless, with one huge paw holding her body, and those fearful teeth set in her ear.

Her poor mother, who was in very ill health, uttered frantic cries for help, and no one knew what help to give.

Then a young officer, scarcely more than a boy, took his gun and said—

"If the captain will give the word, I will shoot the tiger."

They cried to him that he would shoot the child too—that it was impossible.

But the young man said, "God helping me, I can do it."

There was not a moment to lose. The tiger glared on the crowd gathered round, and we saw the huge paw make a slight movement.

Then the young officer, saying aloud in reverent tones, "O God! help me to save the child!" pointed his gun, took aim, and fired. The tiger was shot through the head, and rolled over, dead. Oh, what a shock of horror passed through us as we saw little Amy's ear hanging as it were by a thread, when those dreadful jaws were unlocked and the child was set free!

The surgeon of the ship's company immediately sewed the poor little ear to its place, and the child was laid in her bed.

Many fears were entertained for her life. The shock to the whole system was so great, the laceration so fearful; but so wonderfully did God answer the many prayers offered up for Amy, that when we landed in England she was able to run about, and no one would have thought she had gone through that terrible assault of the tiger.

Heathcote, who had been listening with the deepest attention, said—

"How was her mother—Amy's mother?"

"Ah! Heathcote, I am sorry to say that the fearful shock, coming upon her in her feeble state of health,

was never recovered. The surgeon who examined Amy in London said she would probably get quite well, and that the ear had been so skilfully sewed on, that very little scar would remain, though she would be deaf in that ear for the rest of her life. The doctor from the first gave very little hope of the poor mother, and she died soon after.

"Have you ever seen Amy since? Has Mr. More seen her?"

"Yes, not very long ago. Amy is married, and has gone out to America. Reginald had heard the story from me, and had seen the accident, but he was surprised to find how little Amy herself remembered of the horrid details."

"Well, that is a strange story; and now, do tell us about you and Reg—I mean, Mr. More. What did you do when you got to England?"

"We went to live at Rugby with an old lady, who was Reginald's relation, and then he went to the school as a day-boy."

"Oh, I know all about that!" said Bellfield.

"So do I! I know about the cricket and the football, and his smashing a pane of glass in the doctor's drawing-room with a cricket-ball, and standing as if he were turned to stone, he was so frightened."

"Yes, and the doctor's sister forgave him directly, because she saw it was only an accident, and neither

she nor the doctor were ever angry at accidents, only at what was wicked."

"I see I need not tell you any school stories," Miss Egerton said, laughing, "you know them all as well as I do. But I must go back to the tiger story for a moment, to ask you if you did not admire the courage of the young officer who shot the tiger. A hair's breadth to the right or left, and the child must have been killed. Think what a moment it was."

"I tell you what," said Heathcote, "it is like the story of the apple on the boy's head, that the father had to shoot at."

"I think," said little Bellfield, "it was more like David and the giant, because"— Bellfield hesitated, then added, "because they both said a prayer to God first, and both knew God would help them."

"Yes, Bellfield," Miss Egerton said, "you are quite right; and I have heard that this young officer had a good influence in his regiment, and fell fighting bravely in the Abyssinian war soon after. The bravest soldiers and the bravest men are mostly those who put their trust, as David of old, in the name of the Lord."

When Mrs. Dalton returned, she saw by the boys' faces that they and Miss Egerton had made friends.

"Have they tired you?" she asked.

"No, indeed; I feel much better. I have been talking over old days."

"Will you like to stay with us while we have our Sunday reading?"

"Indeed I shall," Miss Egerton said; and then, high above the busy stream of life in the gay city of Paris, the children and Mrs. Dalton read the evening service for the Sunday, and they sang the same simple hymns as in the cottage on the moor far away.

Heathcote chose one hymn, Bellfield another. Heathcote's was characteristic. He did so like to sing in his loud clear treble—

"Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war."

While Bellfield's choice fell on a hymn Mrs. Dalton had taught him when he was ill—

"There's a Friend for little children
Above the bright blue sky."

You all know that hymn, so I need not write it here. And then the Sunday in Paris came to a close, and the next morning early the children were to start for the sunny south, and leave behind the mists and fogs, the frost and cold, of more northern regions.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SUNNY SOUTH.



HEY were off by eight o'clock the next morning, travelling through France with a speed which would have surprised our grandmothers, in times when a heavy lumbering diligence was a sort of moving prison-house for days and days to those who wished to go from place to place in search of health or amusement.

Those were the days when people wrote long histories of their travels to their friends, and kept diaries of everything that happened, when the sight of the peasants, the men in their blouses and the women in their white linen caps, had all the force of novelty, and the strange language an unwonted sound as the diligence stopped at the inns and villages *en route*.

Now seated in a roomy first-class carriage, with rugs and hot-water tins, the children whisked in the *rapide* through the length of France in an incredibly short time. On they went past houses and châteaux, all laughing to-day in the sunshine,

and here and there a river shimmered in the light as it wandered through fields and answered the whisper of the tall poplars as it glided along.

Those tall, stately poplars are planted in great numbers in France, because the long, straight branches are so useful in the vineyards.

After Dijon the sloping vineyards grew more and more plentiful, now bare and leafless, but in the spring to shoot out a hundred green tendrils round the poplar stems.

The travellers reached beautiful Lyons as the sun was setting, and here Mrs. St. Aubyn and Miss Egerton were established in what are called *coupe lits*, nothing more nor less than little bedrooms prepared for night travellers, and where it is easy to go to sleep and forget locomotion.

Bellfield was seized upon by Elsie and enveloped in wraps innumerable, and put also to bed on a movable apparatus made of lathes of wood with strips of air-cushion between, which, when blown out, make an easy bed put across from one seat to another. Mrs. Dalton was contented with less extensive preparations. She lay with her feet turned up and her back to the window, while Heathcote had the opposite seat. Mr. More was established in another corner by the window, and Elsie and Bellfield were next each other.

Before settling for the night the travellers had

their supper or tea out of the capacious luncheon basket, and then Heathcote, instead of being sleepy, grew very wide awake.

He did not intend to go to sleep, he said, at all. He should look out at the window all night. Certainly till they had passed Marseilles. It was nonsense to go to sleep. And long after the other occupants of the carriage were asleep, Heathcote did manage to keep his eyes open.

There lay his mother, with the sweet serene smile in her face he knew so well. Her long fur cloak was wrapped round her, and a knitted shawl with a crimson edge was drawn over her head, and she had none of the untidy appearance of many travellers at night.

Then there was Mr. More, with his thick ulster buttoned up to his chin, and his travelling cap with ears so closely pulled down that only the tip of his nose was visible.

Elsie was a curious heap of odds and ends of wraps, and her hair was very rough, and her hat tipped over one ear; and every now and then she started, and once or twice looked dreamily at Bellfield, as if to assure herself he was there.

A little green silk curtain was drawn over the lamp at the roof of the carriage, and the light coming through it cast rather a ghastly shade over the sleepers under it.

"How pale Bellfield looks!" Heathcote thought; "I wonder if he is right off asleep? I think I'll try him."

"Bellfield!" Heathcote said in a low whisper.

Immediately a pair of large blue eyes shone out from the wraps, like stars out of a cloud.

"Are you asleep?"

"No; I can't sleep. The train will sing-song so. I wish it wouldn't."

"Don't go to sleep," said Heathcote; "let's talk."

"We shall wake Elsie and Mr. More."

"Not if we talk low."

"What does the train say to you, Heathcote?"

"Oh, I don't know. Thump, thump!—the first thump long and the next short."

"Oh, it says to me—'The sunny *south*, the sunny *south*!' That's what mamma has said a dozen times to every one who came to the Grange. 'We are going to the sunny south, the sunny south;' that's why it has got into my head, I suppose. But I'm so tired of it. I say, Heathcote, I believe the two little girls are in the train."

"I daresay they are not. We should have seen them in Paris if they had stayed there."

"They might not be at our hotel, you know; there are hundreds of other hotels. I did like them so; and you know, Heathcote, I should like to know some

girls for a change. I have never had any girl to play with—have you?”

“I have not wanted any,” said Heathcote. “I am sure I wish for no girls like those stuck-up little Crawfords, who always seem, when they drive through Canaton, as if they were too good to be looked at.”

“Our little girls did not look like that,” said Bellfield. “I have made up my mind I should like them, and I expect we shall find them at Mentone.”

“I wish your brother had come with us,” Heathcote said, turning the subject from the little girls; “he is so jolly.”

“You don’t like him as well as Mr. More, do you?” Bellfield asked.

“Not in the same way. It is such fun to hear Mr. St. Aubyn talking to your mamma. I have liked him from the first day he came into the library and called you a shorn lamb. I can’t think how I dared hack at your hair as I did.”

“I say, young chatterboxes,” said a muffled voice from the ulster, “I wish to go to sleep, so I shall be glad if you would defer your reminiscences of hair-cutting.”

“Have you been awake *all* the time, Mr. More?”

“Yes, all the time. Now, let the train sing you to sleep with ‘the sunny south, the sunny south,’ and don’t stir till we get to Marseilles.”

The children curled themselves up like dormice, and when at last they had reached Marseilles, they were too sleepy to drink the hot coffee which Morris brought to the carriage door.

After half an hour's waiting in the dark, dimly lighted station, they started again, and Heathcote's next remembrance was his mother's touching him and saying, "Look out, Heathcote." It was now broad daylight, the sun was shining on the blue Mediterranean. For while the boys were asleep they had passed through the rocky masses of the Estrelle mountains, and they had skirted the bay where Cannes lies sheltered from northern blasts. The stoppage at Cannes had failed to awaken the children, and now they were actually within sight of Mentone, and the blue sea was just below the carriage windows.

Heathcote rubbed his eyes and sat upright. Bellfield stretched and turned, and said in a dreamy tone—

"Are we at home?"

Mr. More was wide awake, and Elsie was collecting all her various properties.

On they went, past Nice with its background of grand mountains, and Monaco on its rocky promontory; and then about nine the long, long journey was over, and the train puffed noisily into the station at Mentone.

People always look dejected and untidy after a journey by night. "One feels so unlike the morning," Elsie said despairingly.

Then there came a time of bustle, and high-pitched voices were all raised at once, and Morris was bewildered, and, as Elsie said, "off his head;" to which he was heard to reply, "That was no odds, as she was never *on* hers." And then, after a great deal of wrangling with omnibus drivers and men from hotels, the right person appeared—a very nice grey-haired man, who inquired in excellent English if this was the party for the Villa St. Jeanne. The party were only too thankful to say yes, and to see a roomy carriage and a large omnibus outside the station waiting for them.

They were soon jumbling and rumbling off up the Turin Valley for a little way, and then by turns and twists innumerable they found themselves at the Villa St. Jeanne, where a servant in a snowy cap and with a pleasant smile was standing to welcome them.

"How many for the Villa St. Jeanne? Not all these?" the maid exclaimed.

Of course she spoke the soft southern language—a mixture of Provençal French, Italian, and here and there a Moorish word—which was natural to her; but it would not be natural for me to try to write what she said for English children in an English

story. Neither Heathcote nor Harebell could understand at first a word they heard spoken, and there are so many English people at Mentone in these days, that it is not difficult to get on without knowing a word of French. I say it is not difficult, but I do not say it is not far, far more interesting, to be able to speak to the people of a foreign country in their own language. So I advise all children to learn to speak as many languages as possible, and, above all, to learn French before they are no longer children—that rippling pretty language, which I once heard a friend say had the music of the many rivers of France in its sound.

Certainly Gabrielle's voice had this musical sound in it. And if her voice was like the river, her smile was like the sunshine.

"Not all here!" she exclaimed, as Mrs. St. Aubyn swept past her, and the little villa was soon blocked up with the luggage.

"Where can it go? where can you all go, madame?"

"It is too small, this house, Mr. More. Mr. More, it is a mere cottage. I shall not be able to breathe here! And light the fires. How careless not to light the fires! We are worn out."

The Villa St. Jeanne was happily not called upon to take in all the party. There were only two sitting-rooms, a kitchen, and four bedrooms, two

of them but cupboards, according to our English ideas, though Gabrielle showed them all with pride. And of the snowy muslin curtains and spotless beds she might well be proud. As to the fires, they were speedily lighted; the logs of wood were in the open grates, and it was only to set light to them and draw down a little iron plate, and there was a merry blaze.

The sun shining full on the front of the Villa St. Jeanne seemed to make the fire superfluous, but Gabrielle, with a shrug of her pretty shoulders, said—

“The English madames are always so cold, but the sun will soon warm madame.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

VILLA MARIETTA.



ILLA MARIETTA was within sight of Villa St. Jeanne, across the road, but a little higher up the hill. Here Mrs. Dalton and Heathcote had to take up their abode with Mr. More and Miss Egerton, leaving Villa St. Jeanne to the luggage, the servants, and Mrs. St. Aubyn and Bellfield.

The giant craggy mountains which stand up behind Mentone could be seen from the Villa Marietta, while the Villa St. Jeanne faced the south and the sea.

Heathcote felt as if he were ready to walk up to those grand mountains at once, and he said—

“Why, mother, they are like our own tors, only a thousand times bigger. When may I go up them? Mr. More, you will come up, won’t you? You won’t be afraid to come?”

“All in good time, Heather, but I don’t promise you that I will go up one of these crags unless I turn

into a raven, and can perch there, and trust to my wings if I turn dizzy."

"It is very odd," said Heathcote, "but I feel dizzy now. I can't make it out."

"I can, Heathcote," said his mother. "We are all sleepy, and must go to bed."

And then Madame Le Brun came in talking very fast, half English, half French, and said she would show the little gentleman his bedroom. He must sleep his sleep out, and then he would be as brisk as a cicala.

Heathcote felt very much offended at being put to bed in broad daylight, and he disliked poor old Madame Le Brun laying her thin brown hand on his shoulder and saying—

"He is half asleep now, the poor tired little one!"

But when Heathcote saw his pretty little white bed, with its curtains let down over it, making it a cage, he laughed.

"How *am* I to get in?" he said in a sleepy voice. "Mother!"

Madame Le Brun laughed and drew the strings which lifted up the white curtains in a festoon.

"There!" she said; "when he has jumped in we will let them down again. Not that the mosquitos are brisk now, but such a warm day it is better to be on guard."

Heathcote had a very dim remembrance of any-

thing after this. The noise of the train saying—"The sunny south, the sunny south," was still in his ears. And when his mother brought him a cup of coffee he was too sleepy to drink it. How soundly he slept, while his mother in the next room, and Miss Egerton, who slept in the one above, twisted and turned, and at last gave up trying to court the sleep which was so shy of coming to them, and began to read instead.

Villa Marietta was a house where people lived together, and dined and breakfasted together—a pension, of which Madame Le Brun was the mistress. It was a small establishment, and Madame Le Brun only had an old gentleman, his wife, and sister at this time, and a single lady, a Miss Smith, who came to Mentone every year, not for health, nor for amusement exactly, but simply because she had not anything very particular to do at home, and no one to care very much about her.

Madame Le Brun managed everything from top to bottom of the villa; and as all the bedrooms were available as sitting-rooms by their occupants, the little salon was only used of an evening.

Madame Le Brun looked with some jealousy on the inhabitants of Villa St. Jeanne. She could have made room for the whole party, for was not Villa Marietta twice as big as Villa St. Jeanne? Madame would find Gabrielle could make no soup fit for

Christians; and what was a girl worth who could not make soup? It would end in madame sending to the hotel or to Rumpelmeyer's for everything, and then the bill! Madame Le Brun held up her hands, as words failed her to express what the bill would be.

When Heathcote woke, there was a red light on the grey mountains, for they were blushing with the sun's last kiss.

He sprang up, and, forgetting his cage of white net, made his little bed rock and shake; and it was a proof of the strength of the close-woven muslin that it did not tear.

The sensation of being asleep all day was a novel one to Heathcote. He went to the little washing-stand, and plunged his face into the very small basin.

"Mother said there was never any soap in France, but here's a jolly piece. Old Mrs. Le Brun has thought of it; and such nice big towels!"

Heathcote did not know that his mother had provided both soap and towels; such articles were not in Madame Le Brun's inventory. Then there were all his clean, fresh things, laid out ready, and his best suit of navy blue.

"Just as if a fairy had been here," he said; "but of course this must be mother's doing."

When he was ready he rushed headlong down the little stairs, and landed in the passage below just as

a very big bell was ringing, and Mr. More called him.

"Are you ready for dinner, Heathcote?"

"Yes, I think so. Is mother coming down?"

"No; she and Maude are having tea in their room; they prefer it."

Heathcote followed Mr. More into the *salle*, a long, dull, bare room, reaching the whole length of the house at the back, and had his first experience of Madame Le Brun's soup. She sat at the head of the table, and the old ladies and old gentleman bowed grimly to Mr. More and Heathcote, while the single lady smiled, and said in an undertone—

"What a fine little fellow!"

Poor Heathcote, I am afraid, did not like the "single lady" any better for this remark.

The dinner seemed a long affair, for Madame Le Brun's maid was slow and clumsy, and was not nearly so nice looking as Gabrielle. At last it was over, and Heathcote and Mr. More were free.

It was dusk now, but the sky was a deep, dark blue, while countless stars were shining with wonderful brilliancy, and the moon was rising from behind the great Bergean.

"May I come out and see Bellfield?" Heathcote asked. "Do let me."

"Get a coat, then, or comforter, or something."

"Why, Mr. More, I never wear wraps."

"You will have to begin now then. After sunset in these parts there is always a chill; and the hotter the sunshine in the day, the more dangerous the chill of the evening. But come, if you like, for half an hour."

Heathcote ran and put on his overcoat, and was delighted to go down the hill, first into the town across the bridge below the large hotels, which looked like lighted palaces, and then across the road to the sea.

The beautiful Mediterranean was murmuring in its sleep, shut in by Cap St. Martin on the right and the Rochers Rouges below the Pont St. Louis on the left; while the great mountains towered high above the town behind, the moonlight touching some of the craggy peaks with its silver light.

"It's all so strange and beautiful," Heathcote exclaimed; "and how happy all the people seem, singing and chatting!"

They went along the edge of the sea, and turned again into the town at the farther end of the strand, where the quay separates the West from the East Bay; and Mr. More showed Heathcote two narrow streets—one leading through the town past the shops and market to the sea again, the other up the hill to old Mentone, where the life of the people is just as it was before the English found out the little Italian town nestled under its protecting mountains, and ought health in its soft, mild air.

"We must not go any farther to-night," Mr. More said, "but look in at the Villa St. Jeanne before we go home."

"When are we to begin work again, Mr. More?"

"To-morrow, if the books are unpacked," Mr. More said; "and we must work with a will after all this unsettlement."

"Shall we stay here all the winter?"

"I suppose so; that is to say, if things go well with us."

"I think it is rather selfish of Mrs. St. Aubyn to take all the Villa St. Jeanne for herself and the servants, and let mother and Miss Egerton cram into Villa Marietta."

"My boy, there is an old saying—'Never look a gift horse in the mouth,' which means, take what is given you and make no complaints; or, if you don't like it, leave it alone. If it had not been for Mrs. St. Aubyn we should never have found ourselves here at all. She has paid all our travelling expenses, and has paid a great part of my sister's and mine by her salary to me as your tutor. So you see it is not for us to grumble at Villa Marietta or anything else."

Heathcote was silent, and then, after a pause, he said—

"Penelope said mother was made a convenience

of, and I don't think Mrs. St. Aubyn really cares about her."

"Well, we are at Villa St. Jeanne now, so let us drop the subject."

"Listen, Mr. More, listen! What noise is that, like rooks cawing? Do the French rooks caw at night?"

"That is the croaking of the green frogs. Such funny little fellows! When you see them you will be surprised that they can make such a row."

"I hope I shall be able to catch one and keep him in a basin."

"A basin! he'd jump out in a twinkling. Here's Elsie."

"Oh, Mr. More, sir, I am glad you are come; we are in such a pickle here; and as to getting the boxes up to-night, it's impossible. Morris has sprained his wrist, and"—

Poor Elsie sat down on a box and cried bitterly, while Gabrielle came rushing out of the sitting-room talking very fast, and Bellfield's voice was heard from the top of the stairs—

"Heather, do come up, pray do; I am so tired of all this fuss."

It was indeed a fuss. Mrs. St. Aubyn was talking incessantly, blaming every one and complaining of everything—poor Morris in great pain with his

sprain—the little villa insufferably hot with the piling up of the wood fires—all things in dire confusion.

“Run up to Bellfield and I will see what I can do here,” Mr. More said to Heathcote. “Run up to Bellfield,” he repeated.

Heathcote found poor little Bellfield half crying.

“I am nearly roasted here, and mother won’t let me go down; and I couldn’t sleep a bit, for the train *would* sing in my ears. Oh, it is horrid at Mentone! I wish I was back at the Grange. Every one is so cross. I wish I might come to Villa Marietta; and do you hear the rooks, Heather?”

“It’s not rooks; it’s little green frogs, Mr. More says. We will catch some to-morrow and try to keep them. That will be fun; and you will like Mentone when you really see it. I have been down into the town and by the sea. All the lights looked so pretty, and the moon was shining on the mountains behind. Oh, it’s a very grand place; but still, after all, I would as soon be in the Cottage at home.”

“Well, I am sure, I am glad you are here; what should I do without you? Isn’t everything different? Are the ceilings painted in your villa? That’s such a funny boy up there, with a harp in his hand—look!”

“It’s a bow and arrow, not a harp,” Heathcote said.

"I like it rather, and I like the windows with their straight white curtains, and the beds. But your bed is not like mine; mine is a sort of cage—while your curtains hang from the ceiling. Oh, I daresay we shall like it all well enough in time."

"There are heaps of donkeys, Gabrielle says, and we can go up the mountains on donkeys. I can't make out what Gabrielle says sometimes. But her French isn't a bit like Hall's Course."

"Why, no; there is a little of all kinds of languages mixed up in it—Italian, and Provençal French, and some Moorish words; so Mr. More says. Well," added Heathcote, "it's very odd; I still feel sleepy, though I've been asleep all day. I think I shall go home."

"Do you like the Villa Mary——?"

"Marietta! Yes, pretty well. Madame Le Brun is very sharp and pointed somehow. Her nose is pointed and so is her chin, and, in fact, she is all points. Then there is a Colonel Black, and a Mrs. Black, and a Miss Black; they are as cross as two sticks; and there's a fat, jolly, single lady, with a double chin."

"Is she nice?" asked Bellfield.

"Well, no, not exactly, but she is better than the others," were his last words as he answered Mr. More's well-known whistle and raced down-stairs.


"Perhaps the fat lady will be like a cushion to all

the corners in Villa Marietta," sighed little Bellfield. "I am sure I wish we had a cushion here. I suppose I must try to be one."

Bellfield had been reading on his journey at intervals Mrs. Green's admirable story called "Cushions and Corners," and so it came to pass that Miss Smith at the Villa Marietta was called the "cushion" from that time!

CHAPTER XXIV.

LUCIA, THE DONKEY-WOMAN.

N a very few days the strange life became familiar. Lessons went on regularly in the Villa St. Jeanne, where every morning Heathcote ran down just before, or just after, his tutor, and was always hailed by Bellfield with joy.

The sunny south kept up its character, and what with the violets and the olive groves the winter was but a name.

The great event of this first week at Mentone happened a day or two after the children's arrival. It is too important to be passed over in silence; indeed, you could not imagine the life of Heather and Harebell for the next few months without hearing about it.

Mr. More and Mrs. Dalton heard from Gabrielle that the very best donkeys in Mentone were to be had in the East Bay, and they set off one brilliant sunshiny morning as soon as lessons were over to find the place Gabrielle described.

"There is a picture of a large English madame on a donkey," Gabrielle said; "you cannot miss it; and I know the good mother, Lucia, will be thankful if she can get regular custom, for ah! she is a widow and has little children."

This was a weighty inducement to Mrs. Dalton, and Mrs. St. Aubyn said that if the woman was clean and respectable, and would ensure the donkeys would neither kick nor stumble, the boys might have a short ride, and prepare for a longer excursion another day.

The East Bay is separated from the West by the mole and quay where the boats and yachts lie at anchor. On this bright morning everything wore a jocund air. The coloured striped awnings over the shops were all so bright. Every one was astir, invalids in wheeled chairs, gaily dressed girls and boys, people of all nations sunning themselves on the wide esplanade, the sea coming lovingly up to their very feet, leaving a pretty curve of snowy foam, which made a fringe of ever-changing beauty all round the two bays, and showed like a rippling band of white at the foot of the Cap St. Martin.

The picture of the "large English madame" was found, and there was painted on the board, "*Michelle—Les Anes par la course et par le jour et par le demi-jour.*"

An old man, with bright black eyes and a grey

beard, came out from the low room, which was really the cellar of one of the tall houses that faced the street in the old town above.

"Yes, he had donkeys—four donkeys—five francs for the course—two hours or three. Yes," in answer to Mrs. Dalton, "Lucia! Yes, she was his daughter, and it was hard work to feed all her children, and he was an old man. Lucia's husband had been lost at sea in a squall two winters before. No, they could not see the donkeys; they were all out, every one of them. Lucia was with two—Zetta and Juanita; and the old Carlo, he was out with Jacques, Lucia's eldest boy; and Bianca, she was out too. Two little English ladies had Zetta and Juanita. Would the little gentlemen like to have them the next day at eleven?"

And so it was settled. The boys went on with their walk all along the East Bay to the Pont St. Louis, that marvellous bridge which was thrown over a great chasm in the high rocks by Napoleon the First. Ah! how those giant rocks tower above as you stand on the bridge, and how dizzy it makes you feel to look down, down to the little stream below!

Heathcote was so deeply interested in this bridge, and the magnificent view before him, that looking back to Mentone was as nothing in comparison to it. Mountain rose above mountain against the clear sky; the old town of Mentone sat like a queen on



"Coming down the road towards them were seen two little donkeys, and on the donkeys two little girls."—Page 221.

the hill, with its high cathedral tower and its closely packed tall houses, while new Mentone laughed in the sunshine below.

From side to side of this bridge did Heathcote run, and Mr. Moore tried to explain to him how the gulf was spanned by the genius of the great engineer, when Bellfield cried out—

“Look, look, Heather—*do* look!”

There coming down the road towards them were seen two donkeys, and on the donkeys two little girls, the children they had so long expected to meet! By their side walked a sturdy woman, with a bright-coloured handkerchief tied over her dark hair, and she was speaking to her two sure-footed donkeys as if they were her children—“Hi! Zetta, ci-la—ci-la,”—a word I cannot attempt to spell, or say what language it is; but so it sounded from the lips of Lucia, the donkey-woman.

Now, as Zetta came down the hill, stepping surely and gently, the little girl in the saddle, recognising Bellfield, nodded and kissed her hand, and looking back at her sister called out—

“Look, Hilda, look!”

I suppose it was this looking back that was the cause of what followed. Perhaps, too, Zetta put her foot at the very moment on a loose stone. However that might be, the little girl fell, or rather slipped off Zetta's back, and Lucia, springing forward, would

have caught her before she touched the ground had not Heathcote done so.

"O Gerda! are you hurt? O Gerda!"

"I'm not hurt; at least I'm—I'm—I suppose I'm frightened."

"Frightened, indeed!"

And at that moment a very stout person was seen jogging down the hill, hot and excited. This was the children's maid, who had lived with them for a long time.

"Frightened! it's other folk that are frightened. You've just been and taken all the strength out of me till I feel as weak as a babe. If your donkeys go on stumbling and falling like this, I won't have another, I can tell you. Look at your hat, Miss Gerda, all bent, and your new velvet dress bought in Paris! Well, I can just fancy what your aunt will say."

"Please, Hessy, don't be angry with the donkey-woman, with poor Lucia; but I'll walk a little bit now, please, and thank you very much," little Gerda said; "and perhaps one of you would like to ride Zetta."

"If Zetta is going to stumble I think you had better walk, Heathcote," Mrs Dalton said.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said the maid, whom the little girls called Hester. "I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I am that exhausted with tramping up and down, that by your leave I'll mount the donkey. I see a stone handy by that wall there, where the

two men sit like jacks-in-boxes, poor things! to keep the front of the country from robbers!"

"Hester, Hester!" Hilda exclaimed, laughing, "you must not get on poor dear Zetta. You'll break her back, you will indeed! Won't she, Lucia?"

Lucia's native politeness struggled to conceal the smile, which Mr. More, with a whistle, turned away to hide.

"If madame rides slowly there will be no harm to ride Zetta, but she must ride gently—very gently."

"Is it not exactly like the picture over the door?" Bellfield said. "Just as if she had sat for her portrait."

"Hush, Bellfield," Mrs Dalton said, while Heathcote raced down to superintend the mount, at which the two Douaniers stood looking with ill-suppressed amusement.

"I have so often wondered when we should see you," Hilda said. "Gerda and I wanted to see you so much. At all the stations as we came we looked out for our two little boys, for we called you our two little boys, though one is such a big boy. Your brother, is he?"

"No, he is my—my fiftieth cousin," Bellfield said, always remembering Heathcote's explanation of their relationship.

"Your fiftieth? How funny! Well, Gerda is my cousin, not my sister. You must come and

see our grandpapa, and poor Aunt Ella. Grandpapa is very, *very* deaf, but he is so nice; and Aunt Ella is very nervous; she can't help it. Oh! there's Hester falling off the donkey, and those two men laughing. That is very unkind. She is too fat to ride. I hope she is not hurt."

Mrs Dalton had been walking down the hill with little Gerda, and listening to her childish conversation with much pleasure. She was, like her cousin Hilda, quite free from shyness, and put her hand into Mrs. Dalton's with perfect confidence.

Hester's fall caused some amusement to the whole party, and the good woman herself took the laughter of the two men at the Douane very well.

"They've nothing else to do but laugh at their neighbours, I suppose; stuck there to idle away their time. Well, well, I've had enough of donkeys and I shall just tell your aunt, Miss Hilda, that they are dangerous beasts."

At this moment a carriage with a pair of horses came down the hill, and the two men at the Douane resumed a grave official look, and stopped the carriage, which had some boxes outside, and a gentleman and lady inside.

The boundary line between France and Italy is at this point just by the Pont St. Louis; and these men are stationed there to examine the carriages, and see if there is anything in them for which duty ought

to be paid. If there are boxes on the carriage, they are taken down to the Douane in the town and opened there, one of the men mounting guard over the property on its way there.

"Just look at them!" Hester exclaimed, "daring to ride down in that carriage; it would be more to the point if they had given me a lift, for I am worn out with trudging after these stubborn beasts."

"I had better lift you on the donkey again," Mr. More said to Gerda. "I will walk by your side, and then you are sure not to come to grief."

Hilda felt instant security when Mr. More lifted her on Zetta, and laid his hand on the pommel of the saddle when they began to move again.

So the procession moved on into Mentone, and the little girls were so unwilling to part from their new friends, that Mrs. Dalton said she would turn up the steep road leading past the Hôtel Bellevue in the East Bay, where Hilda and Gerda lived.

The terrace of the hotel garden overlooked the road below, and an old gentleman was seen between the orange trees waving his hat and smiling at the little girls.

"Grandpapa, grandpapa!" Hilda exclaimed, "come down to the gate and meet us."

The old gentleman put his hand to his ear as if to catch what was said, and then, with another smile, nodded and turned away. Presently he was seen at

the gate of the hotel, and Hilda, seizing the trumpet which hung round his neck, said—

“This lady and gentleman have been so kind to us; we have walked from the Pont St. Louis with them.”

The old gentleman bowed and smiled, and then handing his trumpet to Mrs. Dalton, asked to whom he had the honour of speaking, introducing himself as Sir Percival Scott.

It is by no means easy to speak into trumpets like Sir Percival's; and, besides, Mrs. Dalton had to enter into such a long explanation. “Nobody was related to anybody else,” as Heathcote said when they were walking home; “but mother got through it splendidly.”

“He said he would come and call on mamma,” said Bellfield. “I hope he will bring Hilda.”

“After all, we don't know their names,” said Heathcote.

“Why, Scott, of course; they are Sir Percival's grandchildren.”

“It is like the genealog-log—oh, bother it! I can't get through that word,” said Heathcote, “which Mr. More gave me about his sister. Don't you remember, Mr. More?”

“Very well; and perhaps this will turn out to be a similar one. Now we are in old Mentone,” he said, as they passed into the narrow street with the

little houses on every side and the arches thrown across at intervals.

Old Mentone ! with its wide flight of steps leading to the Place before the two large churches, out of the narrow street where the life of the people goes on in the same simple way it has done for many a year. There are the younger women with their knitting at the doors ; there are the babies rolled up like little bolsters, nothing to be seen but a dark head and a pair of bright eyes, and their fat little fists always fighting the air or stuffed into their mouths. Rolled up tight like this, the Mentonese babies can be laid anywhere in safety ; there is no creeping or crawling possible, and their mothers can put them on a shelf if it is convenient ! The old women sit with the distaff spinning by the door, and keep a look-out on the children. Here and there sits a patient cobbler at his stall ; and just as the children turned under the archway leading into the lower town again, there was a stall of sticky sweatmeats in papers, presided over by a little deformed man, round which a crowd of children hovered.

One little dark-eyed Mentonese stood apart with her wistful eye fixed on the stall ; she had no centime to exchange for one of the sticky balls.

Mr. More held up a little bit of silver which represented fifty centimes, and speaking to the

child in her own language, asked her if that would not buy what she wanted.

The child's eyes dilated with delighted surprise; but instead of going up to the stall, as Mr. More expected, she uttered a cry of joy and pattered off down the hill as fast as her legs could carry her.

"Where can she be going?" Heathcote said. "I thought she wanted some of those horrid sticky things."

One of the boys standing near Heathcote understood the look, and said to Mr. More—

"She has ran off to her sick brother with the money to buy him some white rolls. She is Lucia's girl—the donkey-woman's child, and she lives up the Mentone Valley, and takes care of the sick boy while her mother drives the donkeys."


"O mother!" Heathcote said, "let us go and see that nice donkey-woman's children. May we go?"

"Not now, Heathcote; I am so tired, and it is very late."

"Yes," Mr. More said, "you are so tired that you must drive home;" and calling a little carriage, they all got into it, and were soon at the Villa Marietta.

CHAPTER XXV.

WET DAYS.

IR PERCIVAL SCOTT and his daughter did not fail to come very soon to call on Mrs. Dalton at the Villa Marietta and Mrs. St. Aubyn at the Villa St. Jeanne, and the friendship between the children grew and strengthened. It was a very happy winter on the whole. Of course there were ups and downs at Mentone as everywhere else.

The "cushion" at Villa Marietta did her best, but poor Heathcote was in frequent disgrace with Madame Le Brun for banging doors and bouncing down-stairs.

Heathcoté was so fond of taking a flying leap down the few last stairs, and this would bring old Colonel Black out of his room with some muttered words, which were repeated by his sister in a louder key, and caught up by Madame Le Brun, who would scream in her shrill voice to the effect that if English boys did not know how to behave they had better stop at home.

Then the "cushion" would come out and say the villa was so thinly built, no wonder it shook, and that boys would be boys, and that the sweet patient invalid Miss Egerton never complained, and that if people had the fidgets they ought never to live in a pension.

Then wet days would come at Mentone as well as in England, and the blue Mediterranean was dark and stormy, and beat angrily against the Rochers Rouges with a continuous roar, and threw up fountains of white spray at the feet of old Cap St. Martin. On these days the wind whistled and shook the windows of Villa St. Jeanne, and Mrs. St. Aubyn descanted on the ill-built house, and lived in perpetual fear of croup, driving off to the Hôtel Bellevue to croak over her grievances with Miss Scott.

Gabrielle was always patient, and kept up a manufacture of sunshine which insensibly warmed Elsie and Morris, and made little Bellfield say that when they went back to England he should like to take her with him.

"It is no use sitting down to cry over trouble," Gabrielle would say. "When the snow came, three years ago, and turned all the lemons black, my father did not give up, but he dug up the ground at the roots of the trees and put in manure, and the last year the crop was nearly double. And even when he

was up in the tree whipping the olives, and the white cloth spread below by the mother was black yes, black with the berries, a donkey came stump stump into the very middle and crushed them to pulp; and when the mother began to cry, the father shouted from the tree, 'Take it not to heart, Marie; there's a good lot up here yet; run home for another cloth, and set the children to pick out the whole ones that are left.' Then the father went on whipping again as if nothing had happened."

"Whipping the olives" is a very curious operation to watch, and the ripe olives fall in a shower under the hand of a skilful whipper.

On wet days Heathcote wrote letters to little Mary at the farm, to Sam, to Penelope, and to Busy.

Bellfield wrote to his brother Randolph, and to MacAndrew, the gardener at the Grange.

Mrs. Dalton forgot no one in the village, and poor Bob Curtis had the honour of a letter written in "double lines," which was carried about inside his waistcoat till scarcely a shred of the foreign paper was left to tell of what had once been a letter.

How Bob laboured at the night-school to write well enough to answer the letter himself; how he wrote a few words at a time; and when, at last, the blotted nearly illegible scrawl was enclosed in one of Penelope's envelopes, its effect on Mrs. Dalton surprised even Heathcote. The far-off home on the

moor came back to her with Bob's scrawl, and all the love of her people there. Tears, which Heathcote so rarely saw his mother shed, fell on the piece of paper, where Bob had twisted up the bud of a Christmas rose which grew in a shady corner of the Rectory garden.

The letter was as follows:—

“This here note, Madam, is to say that I be going on all fair, and Mister Parker, he has rose me two shillings, ma'am. This is all your doings, ma'am. For the same I love and bless you evermore.—Your servant,
BOB.”

Then came a very large P.S.—

“I takes the liberty to send you a flower. I nussed it up for you. The snow was thick on it when I pulled it.”

“Coals to Newcastle,” Mr. More said; but his eyes glistened with sympathy and pleasure all the same.

Maude Egerton, whom Miss Smith called the patient invalid, was as full of interest in all the people at Canaton as if she knew them herself. And when one very wet day there was no hope of any clearance, when the boys had finished their lessons, and Bellfield had been muffled up and brought up to Villa Marietta, she proposed that they should start a “Mentone Magazine,” and

that it should be sent to their distant friends every week or every fortnight.

"A sort of 'Little Folks' or 'Wide-Awake,'" Bellfield exclaimed. "Oh, that is splendid! And shall it be illustrated? Do let us begin now!"

"Yes, to-day if you like," Miss Egerton said. "I have a heap of foolscap paper in my desk, and we can begin at once."

"There must be an editor, of course," Heathcote said. "You must be the editor."

"Yes, and Hilda and Gerda must write for it, and grown-up people too. Mr. More and Mrs. St. Aubyn must be asked. Oh, it will be jolly!—much better than beginning so many letters—'My dear somebody'—and having to end them all the same."

"Yes, and we can write little bits at a time—bits of news, and riddles, and what we do—all about Lucia's little children up at Castelar, and about Margherita, and the poor sick brother. Mary will be so pleased."

"Shall we ask the 'cushion' to contribute, mother? And must we say, 'Dear Mr. Editor'?"

"No, of course not; it is 'Miss Editor,'" said Bellfield.

"That does not sound right; we will say, 'Madam.'"

"And now about the title of the magazine. Oh, I wish Hilda and Gerda were here to consult. Girls

always do catch up names better than boys. It is not raining so hard now; perhaps, after all, Hilda and Gerda *will* turn up. They were to come to-day directly after dinner."

And as Heathcote spoke a closed carriage drove up to Villa Marietta, and two little bright, happy faces looked out of the window; and then Sir Percival Scott's courier jumped down from the box and lifted out two little figures dressed in dark blue with scarlet trimmings, who were soon set down in the hall of Villa Marietta, and Heathcote and Bellfield came jumping out to greet them with such glee, that the Colonel called gruffly from the head of the stairs to know what the row was about, and Hilda and Gerda were got safely into Miss Egerton's room, where the consultation about the magazine was held.

Miss Egerton's room was the general meeting-place of the party at Villa Marietta. Her little bed, with its snow-white curtains, stood in a recess, and the room, but for this—which was rather ornamental than otherwise—looked like a pretty sitting-room. Miss Egerton was very much stronger and better, though she could only venture out in the very sunny, bright days. But she was stronger, and sat at her big desk covering sheets of foolscap with her clear, pretty handwriting, or correcting what are called "proofs" for her brother, who was employing

his spare time at Mentone in editing one of Shakespeare's plays.

"Will the children be too much for you, Maude?" Mrs. Dalton asked as the little girls came in with Heathcote and Bellfield.

"Oh no! they are come at the very best time to consult about the magazine."

"We are going to set up a magazine," Heathcote said, "and you are to write for it, and we are going to call it the—the"——

Hilda and Gerda were quite bewildered, but they looked upon Heathcote as an oracle, and never doubted that what he proposed must be right.

"We were so dull," Gerda said, "that grandpapa said he would send us to see you; and if it is fine, Oscar is to call for us at four, and we are to walk back. If it goes on raining the carriage is to be sent again for us."

"Now do let us hear about the magazine. We must have a consultation about its title; and the editor, that's Miss Egerton, must decide it."

"I think we must all sit quietly down to the table and have a meeting; we will make Mrs. Dalton president in the chair to keep order."

"Very well, that's capital! And may I call Mr. More?"

"Not yet; not till we have advanced further."

There was a great deal of laughing and excitement

amongst the children, and then a great deal of importance. Every suggestion about the magazine was put to the vote by the president and carried by the majority.

Mr. More, hearing from his room the merry voices, soon came and asked for admission; and in a few minutes a tap at the door was heard, and when Bellfield went to open it, there stood the "cushion" with a bunch of violets for Miss Egerton.

She looked so wistfully at the happy party by the table that Miss Egerton said—

"Will you come in and join us, Miss Smith, in our great literary venture? We are organising a magazine."

"Oh, dear," said Miss Smith, "I shall be so pleased, for I feel so dull in the salon. Tempers there are—well! Oh yes, I shall be delighted to come."

So room was made for Miss Smith, and little Gerda put her hand in hers, and said, "I am glad you are come!" and this sweet child-like welcome woke in Miss Smith's heart a beautiful sense of love and tenderness, which seemed to her sometimes to be dried up in the bickerings and puerile fancies of the other inhabitants of Villa Marietta.

A very happy afternoon was spent, and rules passed for the formation of the magazine, which was started under the title of "The Swallow," because

little Hilda said it will take messages to England from Mentone, and swallows fly so fast!

The rules were—

1. That no letter or article exceed one page of foolscap.
2. That the editor be allowed to make a selection from the MSS. sent in to her.
3. That the "Swallow" shall be published every week or fortnight, at discretion of the editor.
4. That illegible writing be rejected.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"THE SWALLOW."



HE arrangement of the magazine proved a great interest; and when, at four o'clock, Morris arrived at the Villa Marietta to say, with Mrs. St. Aubyn's compliments, that she hoped to see the Miss Scotts and Master Dalton to coffee with Master Bellfield, the children could scarcely believe the afternoon was over.

Mrs. St. Aubyn had prepared a delightful coffee and sweet cakes from Rumpelmeyer's, and was greatly interested in "The Swallow."

She promised to contribute; and, indeed, Mentone was rising in favour with her. The drives and the society and the afternoon teas had reconciled her to a great deal. And Bellfield's improved health was indeed enough to make his mother feel grateful to Mentone. The child was growing strong and rosy. He had lost all trace of the hoarseness which that night on the moor had left for some time; and his

spirit and energy and keen enjoyment of everything was a contrast to the languid, fretful, pining child of a few months before.

With Heathcote the effect of the climate and surroundings was very different. He missed the fresh bracing air of his native moors; and there was always in him a longing to get to the top of those craggy mountains which hemmed him in on every side, while the zigzag paths on the olive terraces and between the lemon groves were a weariness to him. Mr. More had great sympathy with this feeling, and neither he nor Heathcote flourished in the "sunny south" as the delicate people of their party did.

"It is a new life to Maude," Mr. More said one day as he and Heathcote were returning slowly from the old Monastery of Annunciata, to which they had climbed together, while the others preferred Lucia's donkeys. "It is a new life to her, and so it is life to me; but I would give something for a sniff of real North Devon breeze, even if it had a touch of ice in it."

"Oh, so would I, Mr. More," Heathcote said. "I never felt my legs full of lead till I came here. Don't you wish you could get to some of those snow mountains we saw up the valley near Nice?"

"I don't think we should improve matters there much," Mr. More said. "And it's not for you and I to grumble at what is doing those we love so much

good. Your mother looks a different being. Quite rosy and strong ; and I have not heard her cough for weeks."

"We are to read the first number of 'The Swallow' this afternoon. Don't forget. The editor's box was stuffed so full ! Did you see it ? It was such a good idea of Hilda. It is a large paper box of her auntie's, where she kept her finery, flowers, and things ; and Hilda got Hester to turn them out, and cut a slip in the top, and tied a piece of blue ribbon round, and wrote outside—

"'Editor's Box. Swallow Magazine. Not to be opened without leave. Contributions thankfully received.'

"I hope you have put something into the box, Mr. More."

"I hope, if I have, it won't be amongst rejected communications," Mr. More said. "There's a rule about illegible writing, I believe."

"Yes ; but if the author can get anybody to copy it out for him, it is to be taken back."

"That's an easy way of getting out of the difficulty. Perhaps I shall come to you, Heathcote, with mine."

"I know you are laughing at me," said Heathcote ; "I have not forgotten the double lines."

"Neither have I," said Mr. More kindly, with a sudden bright smile which seemed to warm Heathcote's heart. "The double lines showed me how

single-hearted and honest the writer was. We have been fast friends since that day, Heathcote."

Heathcote was too pleased to say anything but a low "Yes."

The first reading of "The Swallow" was a great event. It took place in the Villa St. Jeanne on a bright sunny day, when the Editor could safely leave the house and walk down the hill with the two eager little boys.

Then Hilda and Gerda arrived from the Hôtel Bellevue, and Aunt Ella begged to be allowed to come with them. I wish I could show you the party as they all clustered round the Editor, who sat in a comfortable chair, and Miss Smith at her side, for the "cushion" of Villa Marietta had won her way with them all, and she was taken into confidence about "The Swallow" from the first.

The title-page of the magazine was very artistic. A large swallow was drawn on it by Bellfield, with a very forked tail, and a very big letter was tied across his back, which was, of course, the first number of the magazine. Below the swallow was printed in large and small letters—

"THE SWALLOW, a magazine for distant friends, containing stories of many kinds, with accounts of walks and rides, and the story of 'Lucia the Donkey Woman,' with an introduction by the Editor, to

whom all letters are to be addressed, and dropped into the Editor's box, always ready.

"The illustrations are by Harebell and Gerda.

"*N.B.*—It is hoped to publish 'The Swallow' once a week till further notice."

Miss Egerton read this aloud with due care and precision, and then went on to the first page, which was—

LUCIA'S STORY.

I should like to tell you about poor Lucia. Her husband was drowned in the sea, and left her with a number of little children. They live up in the mountain at a place called Castelar all the winter, while Lucia lives with her father in Mentone, and she and Jacques—that is her son's name—drive the donkeys, and so she earns money for her children.

One day we went up to Castelar to see the children. We set off very early, for it is a long way up to Castelar. The donkeys and Lucia knew the way, of course, and they did not seem to think it so very steep. But it was, and it was hard work not to slip off behind. Castelar is such a funny place, very, very high up, and the big high mountain called the Bercean looks quite close to it, but it is not; it would take six hours more to get up to the top of it.

Castelar has only one straight, narrow, dirty street, and a church at the end, and the houses

don't look as if people could live in them at all, only donkeys!

The minute Lucia's children heard the sound of the donkey's feet, they came running out to meet their mother. All but one; he is lame and very ill, and Margherita, who is only eleven, is very kind to him. She cleans the room and keeps a little bunch of flowers on the shelf by Louis's bed; and the day we saw her first, looking hard at the sweetie stall, when Mr. More gave her a sixpence—no, not sixpence, but fifty centimes—she rushed off with it that she might get Louis some white bread. Castelar was built up so high that the Moors might not come and steal the children. I have room for no more by the rules.

HAREBELL.

DEAR EDITOR,—I want to tell you that two little girls were in a great big hotel in London, and saw two boys they *knew* they should like if they could only find them at Mentone. And one day when I fell off a donkey, there was one of the boys ready to catch me. Is not this a *cocinidence*? I hope, dear Editor, you will spell that word right if it is wrong.

GERTRUDE.

GARDENER'S CHRONICLE.—Two botanical specimens were brought from North Devon to the South of France a few weeks ago. The *genista* is rather

languid, and does not look so stiff and sturdy as in its native climate. The harebell, on the contrary, instead of hanging its head, is losing the graceful droop of the pale blue blossom, and we believe it will soon be as large as the campanula of the district.

"There is no signature to that paragraph," the Editor said, "not even a *nom de plume*."

I am no hand at writing a story nor a letter, but I want to tell Sam Forster about a spider's nest I found on a bank here. It is made of earth, and is all spun together, and there is a lid to it—a real lid, which opens and shuts on a hinge. I shall bring it home with me.

The donkey-woman's boy Jacques showed me where to look for it, just as Sam told me where to look for the wren's nest. I wish I had them here, those little wrens, for there is no frost and snow to kill them, not this winter, but there was frost and snow two years ago that turned the lemons black.

HEATHER.

"There is no waste of words in that contribution," said Mr. More; but the Editor called him to order, and said, "No comments were allowed till she had finished reading."

Next came a paper entitled "Christmas in the Sunny South."

Not a bit like a real Christmas, the sun was so hot ; and though there was a sort of an attempt at plumpudding, it was not right. One thing was pretty. M. Coquil at our hotel put beautiful wild asparagus all round the looking-glasses, and it is not faded yet. We gave a lot of presents to each other ; and we felt it was Christmas because every one sent us cards and presents from England. I am afraid I have nothing more to say. HILDA.

As soon as the Editor began to read the next paper, poor Miss Smith showed symptoms of being very uneasy, and soon hid her face, and now and then murmured something which was inaudible behind her pocket-handkerchief.

The poet Schiller has said flowers and young children are the ornaments of God's earth. I have found this true. Two children have made my life happy this winter at Mentone. One of them has by his kindness and good-temper made me feel that boys are like the fresh breezes which blow over the blue sea. If a little boisterous now and then, they do one good and freshen one up, and this boy has cheered the life of A LONE WOMAN.

"Who does she mean ?" asked Heathcote.

But his mother said, "Hush, dear! no questions!"

The next communication caused much interest and amusement; it was headed, "An Old Fable Illustrated."

A few months ago a gentleman was carrying a basket of fine strawberries and flowers from Nice to San Remo.

The man appointed to examine the passengers' luggage stopped him and said—

"That basket, sir, must not pass. No fruit, flowers, or vegetables are permitted to pass the frontier on account of the phylloxera beetle."

(Please, dear Editor, correct this name of the beetle if I have spelled it wrong.)

"Beetle! beetle! humbug!" was the reply; "as if there was a beetle in the strawberries!"

"It is forbidden, sir; the phylloxera is carried sometimes hidden in flowers and fruit."

"Phyllox! nonsense! What harm can it do?"

"Simply destroy the vines, sir," said another man, "and bring ruin to thousands of families."

"Don't stand and argue with the gentleman," exclaimed another official; "seize the strawberries!"

The man appealed to laid his hand on the basket firmly and said—

"Pardon, sir, but I seize this in the name of the King of Italy."

"In your own name, you insolent fellow! I suppose you want to eat the strawberries yourself. Anyhow, you shall be disappointed."

And after more unseemly wrangling the Englishman went to an open window, turned out the contents of the basket into a dirty yard below, and walked away amid the derisive laughter of the Italians who watched the scene. One old English gentleman—a gentleman in the true sense of the word—going quietly up to his angry countryman, said—

"You remind me of the old fable, sir, of the dog in the manger. Why should you quarrel with a man for doing his duty? You had better have given that lovely fruit and flowers to him, to take home to his children, than thus sinfully waste the choice gifts of God."

CARITÀ.

"Mother! that's mother!" but Mrs. Dalton looked reprovingly.

A very pretty sketch of the Villa Marietta, with the mountains behind and two donkeys standing before it, was now passed round for admiration.

"Oh, that's my mother's drawing," said Bellfield delighted. "She can draw and paint better than anybody else."

After this there were some curious receipts, headed—

DOMESTIC COOKERY,

For Use at Home and Abroad.

Acid Drops.—Of selfishness, 1 grain; of self-conceit, 2 grains; of carelessness for the feelings of

others, 1 grain; of irritability, 1 grain. Mix all and bake before a hot fire of ill-temper. Split up into tablets or angular-shaped drops with the sharp knife (Latin, *Lingua*), and offer to your nearest neighbour to produce the effect you desire.

Reviving Cordial.—Of good temper, 3 grains, of bright cheerfulness, 3 grains; of humility, 3 grains. Mix all with a few drops of the spirit of love and thoughtfulness for others, and pour out to your friends on dark and cloudy days. The effect will be marvellous, and must be seen to be believed.

"No name again; that is Mr. More, then."

"Of course," said Bellfield; "I knew that by the Latin word."

"As if every one did not know *lingua* meant tongue," exclaimed Heathcote.

"Hush! hush! we are breaking rules," said the Editor.

Next came advertisements.

Lost.—Two hours on Monday while looking for a French Grammar. Whoever will bring the same to Heather, care of Editor, will be rewarded.

Wanted.—Some pens that won't blot and some ink that won't go in the wrong place in a page instead of the right. Also, a cure for inked thumb-nails.

Wanted.—A dictionary with words all spelt *right*.

The dictionaries in use at Villa Marietta must be very defective.

One penny (*Anglice*) weekly subscriptions received by the Editor for the support of the magazine, postages to England, and other expenses. It is proposed to open a subscription list for some things which will brighten the lonely hours of Lucia's sick boy and to buy Margherita a new frock; also, a subscription list for presents to take home to friends at the Farm, Cottage, and Rectory, at Canaton, North Devon.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW.



AND so the winter passed away, and bright and beautiful spring came; not like the slowly developed spring of the North, but a quick, sudden burst of colour and of beauty.

"The Swallow" began to be less regularly published, and the lesson-hours shortened. For it was such life and joy to be out in that radiant sunshine, when, early in April, the mimosas were golden with blossom, and the turf beneath the silvery grey of the gnarled olives was spangled with flowers, scarlet anemones, narcissi, and lady tulips. Then the scent of the orange and lemon groves, and the song of the birds, and the feelings of life which seemed to beat like a pulse through the whole country!

The people were all in their brightest dresses to suit the spring. Lucia's dark hair was bound back by a lemon-coloured handkerchief, and she wore with pride a short red skirt under her large apron, a gift from her little ladies and gentlemen.

Then how the washerwomen were chattering and singing at the streams, banging and beating the linen with marvellous energy, and soaping it upon the surface of the big boulders. How the dark-eyed girls bore away piles of wet linen in baskets on their heads, holding them erect, knitting as they went, and stepping out with the stately tread of princesses!

The children had several favourite walks, sometimes with Mr. More, sometimes with Elsie; and when the boys spent the day at the Bellevue Hotel in the East bay, they went alone to the olive grove near. They climbed up the terraces, through lemon groves, and came at last to the little hidden pool where grew *l'herbe de la Fontaine*, the lovely maiden-hair, which grows in our greenhouses in England. With many of the simple people in their huts on the hills the children became familiar. They were well known, "the four dear children, the two pretty pairs," that rode Lucia's donkeys, and had been the making of her poor children up at Castelar.

"Not that any one could grudge the poor things a little comfort, for it's a lonesome life for them up there, and they are all babies together."

So spoke la Tante Lisa, who was a relation of Gabrielle's, and lived up in the olive groves, on the way to Castelar, with her beautiful goat, Duchesse.

As the children passed her little cottage one lovely April morning, she came out with a saucer full of Alpine strawberries and a wooden bowl of Duchesse's milk.

"The pretty creature," said Hilda; "I think she is the very prettiest goat I ever saw."

"Yes, indeed; there is not one to compare with her. She always hears your donkey's steps and throws up her head. Look, now, here she comes, and her kid with her."

"Oh, that we could take the little kid back to England," Gerda said; "we would call her Little Duchess."

"Ah! but you are not going back to England yet. What will become of la Mère Lucia?"

Lucia shook her head and said—

"They will return with the swallows, when the cold winds blow in their country."

The children finished their strawberries and milk, and went on to Castelar.

It was like a city of the dead when they reached it—so quiet, so still. All the people were at work in the olive groves whipping the trees. The great stupendous mountains stood up in the stillness, and the sunshine lay on the square piece of grass just outside the town where the women dried their linen. Here there was a wide spreading plane tree, under which lay poor Louis, and Pierre and Baptiste, his

brothers, were sprawling on the grass by Margherita's side, while Josephine, the baby, was in her arms. Margherita sprang to meet her mother, and hastily putting the little Josephine into the arms of Pierre, she began to help Hilda and Gerda from the donkeys. Margherita looked a happier and more cared-for child than when Heathcote and Harebell had first seen her at the stall in old Mentone.

You may be sure Mrs. Dalton had talked much to Margherita, and what she had taught her you may hear if you follow her as she walked with little Hilda past the church at the other end of the village, to look down on the valley over which the giant Bercean keeps guard. Hilda always liked to stand there for a few minutes, for she was a thoughtful child, and in some unexplained way those great stern mountains seemed to raise her heart heavenward. Older people have felt that same power of the mountains, and have found it as hard as Hilda did to express the feeling in words. But on this beautiful day the child's heart seemed full to overflowing, and she squeezed Margherita's brown fingers in her little fair white ones, and said in the broken French which all the children could speak now—

"I shall think of you very often, Margherita, and I do hope you will be happy now. The summer is coming and your mother will be with you, and next winter perhaps you will all go and live in Mentone."

"Ah! but whether we go there or not," said Margherita, "it will never be the same again—never so sad any more; for the dear lady has taught me to think of the Lord Jesus as quite near, and not very far up in heaven with the saints, so that He does not care for the poor and for the children."

"Of course He cares very much," Hilda said, "and when we pray to Him we feel He cares. Don't we, Margherita?"

"Yes," said the child; "and when poor Louis is cross and peevish, and can't be pleased, then I think of the blessed Lord, and try not to be cross too. For you know, mademoiselle, I did once or twice slap Louis when he did fret and tease all night, when I was so sleepy too, and woke Josephine, so that she cried. But now I pray to be gentle, just as madame tells me. Madame is an angel, and there is a little lame girl in her own country who is waiting for her to go back."

And as the little dark-eyed Margherita, the poor peasant child of the Mentone valley, stood with her hand locked in Hilda's, a gay party of ladies and gentlemen came up from the valley on the other side. They were come for a picnic, and they were all laughing and talking, and one lady said—

"Look at that dirty child standing so close to that pretty little girl. She will catch some complaint."

"They make a pretty picture, though," said a gen-

tleman, taking out his sketch-book, "and that boy coming up behind them completes it. I say, stand still a minute, will you, up there?"

"Fancy drawing that little creature!" said the lady.

Margherita had not understood the remarks of the first speaker, but Hilda had, and with a little dignified nod she said—

"We cannot stay to be sketched, thank you, and Margherita is not dirty; she is the child of Lucia, our donkey-woman."

Peals of laughter broke forth from the party at Hilda's words, but Heathcote came to the rescue.

"Come away, Hilda, come. English people don't set a very good example of politeness, anyhow. Come away, Hilda."

"What a handsome boy!" Heathcote might have heard if he had waited, but he had taken Hilda's hand, and they were running quickly down the street again to the open square of grass, where Lucia and her children, and the two or three neighbours who were not out at work, were chatting merrily.

They remounted the donkeys and went towards Mentone again. The path in many places was very steep, but Zitta and Rita and Carlo and Bruno were sure-footed, and the children had learned to sit quite upright, and so lessened the danger of slipping over the heads of the donkeys in going down the hills, and slipping off their backs in going up.

They passed in the valley a dark-brown stream, which was coloured by the olive-mill and looked dark and sombre.

It was a relief to come out again from under the shadow of the olive terraces to the sunshine and the glimpses of the blue sea, where boats with snow-white sails were fluttering like summer butterflies.

The children rode silently; they were thinking that they would soon take their last ride at Mentone. Lucia plodded steadily along; she, too, was thoughtful, and but for a "Ci-la!" now and then, she was for the most part silent.

Just as the party reached the bridge over the stream which runs down from the Turin Valley, they saw a crowd collected and people were running hither and thither. A man from Rumpelmeyer's was carrying a glass of water, and another was running as fast as he could up the street.

"What is the matter?" Bellfield said; "something must be the matter!"

"It is a carriage upset," said Hilda. "Oh, there is a poor horse lying on its side!"

"O Lucia! what can it be?" Gerda exclaimed.

Heathcote alone made no remark. He had raised himself in the stirrups, and was trying to see over the heads of the crowd. He caught sight of a familiar face—that of the doctor who attended Miss

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"With a cry of 'Mother!' he fell down by the insensible form."—
Page 257.

Egerton, making his way through the people, who stood round a shattered carriage and a fallen horse.

What made Heathcote's heart stop beating for a moment, and then thump so wildly that he could scarcely steady himself to get off the donkey?

But the crowd had parted for a moment and Heathcote had caught a glimpse of Morris. Instantly it flashed on him that the carriage which had been upset was the one in which his mother and Mrs. St. Aubyn had driven that morning to the Mortola Gardens with Mr. More and Miss Smith. Heathcote leaped down from Zitta's back and went unsteadily, as if he were in a dream, to the skirts of the crowd. Some one near him said—

"They were all thrown out, but none are hurt but one lady, and she is dead."

"One lady! Which lady?"

"Go back, my dear Master Heathcote," he heard another voice say; "go back. Wait, wait!"

It was Morris's voice, raised almost to a cry.

Not one word did the boy speak. He pushed on till he reached the spot where Dr. Markham was kneeling. The doctor looked pityingly up at the boy, who, with a cry of "Mother!" fell down by the insensible form lying on the road; and, as if his great grief had broken his heart, lay without sign of life by his mother's side.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SUSPENSE.



R. MARKHAM, the doctor, turned quickly to Mr. More and said, "Take him away!" Then Mr. More lifted Heathcote in his strong arms and bore him from the crowd of people, for the most part curious, no doubt, and eager to gather news of the accident, but on the whole quiet, and bearing on their faces the expression of deep sympathy.

Mr. More roused Heathcote, and he struggled to his feet.

"Somebody said," he began, "somebody said mother was dead," putting his hand to his brow.

He looked up imploringly at Mr. More.

"Oh, say it is not true! Oh, please, say it is not true!"

Mr. More's quivering lips refused to frame the words; but yet there was a slender hope, and he caught at it.

"Mr. Markham did not say so, dear boy. She may be, it is possible, she may be only stunned; it is

possible," he repeated, for Heathcote's face worked convulsively, and he said—

"Let us go back to her."

"No, Heathcote, you must come home with me. You can do no good; you might do harm."

Heathcote took in at once what Mr. More meant; so with an unusual effort he turned and walked by Mr. More's side.

"It is very brave of you, my boy," Mr. More said, "worthy of *her* son; come to my sister."

Miss Egerton had not gone for the drive that morning, as the wind was cooler than it had been for a week past, and she was afraid of getting cold.

She saw her brother and Heathcote coming up the steep bit of garden before Villa Marietta, and one glance showed her something was wrong. She came to the top of the stairs, and Mr. More went up to meet her.

"The carriage was overturned by the bridge, coming in violent contact with a waggon-load of stone. We were all thrown into the road, and Mrs Dalton is—— Take Heathcote into your room; I must go back."

"Oh, you have a cut on your forehead," his sister said. "You look so ill."

"It is dreadful," he answered; "but don't question me; think of him."

For Heathcote had sunk down on the lowest step

in a state of hopeless grief hard to witness. The desolation he felt no one can describe. In all his short life he and his mother had never been separated. In all his troubles and cares "to tell mother" was the first impulse; but here he was standing alone, face to face with a sorrow which seemed to crush him with its weight and bitterness.

If only he had Penelope or Busy, if only he was at home again, not here in Madame Le Brun's pension! For she had come into the hall and was indulging in loud exclamations with raised hands and voice; and the old Colonel came out and the servants, and still Heathcote sat in dumb despair on the lowest step of the staircase. Mr. More had gone back to the bridge, and Miss Egerton, finding it impossible to move Heathcote, put her arm gently round him and drew his head down upon her shoulder as she sat beside him.

"I am praying for you, Heathcote," she whispered. "Perhaps God will spare her."

"They said she was dead," the child said in a low, unnatural, hoarse tone. "Oh, I want to die too!"

"Won't you come up to my room?" Miss Egerton whispered, "away from all the others? Do come."

"Yes, you'll get cold in the draught," he said. And tottering to his feet he suffered Miss Egerton to lead him upstairs.

Poor Heathcote! who would have recognised him? The agony of the conflict within him so changed him that even the old Colonel, looking over the balustrade, said—

“He is awfully cut up, poor boy.”

Presently the hall door was pushed open and Bellfield came in; he followed Heathcote upstairs, and stood at the door of Miss Egerton's room, timid and uncertain whether to advance or not. Miss Egerton had placed Heathcote in an easy-chair and was wetting his forehead with eau-de-Cologne.

When Heathcote caught sight of Bellfield, he held out his arms, and the child flew to him, sobbing out—

“O Heather, Heather!” and then, to Miss Egerton's great relief, the set, unnatural expression left the boy's face, and the two little companions of the moor mingled their tears together.

So they sat for another quarter of an hour, and then wheels were heard, and the sound of voices, then the heavy tread of those who bore a burden.

“What is that?” Heathcote said, starting up.
“What is it?”

Miss Egerton guessed that they were bringing Mrs. Dalton home, and when Heathcote tried to go to the door she stopped him.

“Wait, darling! My brother is sure to come and tell us as soon as he can. Wait!”

Heathcote struggled to free himself, but when Miss Egerton whispered "For her sake," he sank back in the chair, holding Bellfield close.

Then there was another pause; the little French clock ticked, the woodfire crackled, the sounds in the villa of feet and of voices ceased, and so in silence and in prayer Miss Egerton kept her watch with the children.

It was but an hour from first to last, but to Heathcote it seemed longer than all his life before. His mind went off to the home on the moor, to Sam, to poor Mary—what would Mary do?—to Bob Curtis, and old Mr. Parker, and to Penelope. He recalled how Penelope cried and rocked herself to and fro by the fire that night when it was decided for them to go to Mentone. Then he fancied himself in the darkness on the moor again, and he remembered his mother's meeting him in the hall at the Grange with a distinctness which made the pain at his heart intolerable.

Oh, that they would come and tell him! Oh, that he might go and see for himself how she was! He *must* go, he could not bear it another minute; it would kill him. He flung Bellfield suddenly aside, and saying, "I must go," he was springing to the door, when it opened, and there stood Mr. More!

"Your mother is living, my dear boy, but there is yet much to fear. Still God is merciful, and He

may restore her to you, and to us all," he added, as he drew Heathcote towards him and kissed his forehead.

But for the second time that day the revulsion of feeling was too much for Heathcote, and he slipped from Mr. More's arms on to the floor in a long fainting fit.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PARTINGS.



FOR many days Mrs. Dalton's life hung on a thread, and in all future time Heathcote will associate the sunshine and the flowers of Mentone with the deep anxiety and dread of those days. But children have a well-spring of hope in them which we, who have gone far on in the journey of life, cannot feel. Heathcote hoped, nay, believed, that his mother would be restored to him. From the moment that he heard she lived, he did not doubt that she would get better; and touching indeed it was to see this impetuous, high-spirited boy entering his mother's room with a quiet subdued air, treading so softly that it might well be said of him, "He was as a daughter for gentleness and a son for strength."

This accident called out the loving sympathy of many in Mentone.

"It is no matter where mother is, people always love her," Heather said one day, when Margherita

arrived with a fresh bouquet of roses, now in all their glory throughout the Riviera, and a basket of strawberries she had gathered with the dew on them on the rocky heights for the dear madame.

Never did Heathcote forget the tears of joy in Lucia's dark eyes when she heard that the good English lady was getting better. Never did he forget Gabrielle's ecstatic exclamation—

“Ah! the Lord has spared the mother to the child, just as the Tante Lisa said He would.”

Thus Heathcote discovered, what it falls to the lot of many of us to discover, that sorrow and trouble teach us how many loving hearts beat in sympathy with ours.

Mrs. St. Aubyn was one of those who had lived under the insensible influence of Heathcote's mother, and there was nothing that she did not long to do to show her affection for her.

All the choicest flowers and fruit made the sick-room an Eden, and Maude Egerton made a perfect bower of Margherita's roses, geraniums, and heliotropes, with all the beautiful leaves of fern and trailing plants, now growing in the wildest luxuriance.

When Mrs. Dalton was able to be moved, she was taken to Bordighera, where Heathcote and Miss Egerton accompanied her. The change was thought good for her; and in sunny Bordighera she gathered strength daily. Here stately palms raise their

plummy heads; here the rolling wood-crowned hills of Italy replace the sterner mountains which shut in Mentone. A few days here and at lovely San Remo worked wonders, and Sir Percival Scott and his party came to the Hôtel Bellevue there for the last week in the Riviera before returning to England by Genoa and the Italian lakes. Mrs. St. Aubyn and Bellfield, Elsie and Morris, joined Sir Percival, while Mr. More and his sister waited at San Remo with Mrs. Dalton and Heathcote till it became too hot to stay in the Riviera.

The parting of the children was a sad one, and Bellfield was really heart-broken, but Heathcote had scarcely room for any thought but his mother and the joy of having her.

"If I had been obliged to go back without her," he would say, "leaving her in the cemetery on the hill at Mentone, where the figure of the white lady looks across to the sea, oh! what should I have done? Nothing can seem hard, as I have got mother; all the same, it will be jolly to find Hilda and Gerda at the Grange with Bellfield when we get back."

It was Ascension Eve, and Heathcote was walking sedately by his mother's chair on the road behind the hotel, which seems to be leading straight into the very heart of the hills.

The chair was stopped that Mrs. Dalton might

look at the view, and across the valley came the sweet sound of the church-bells from Colla.

"They sound like a thanksgiving," Mrs. Dalton said, "and how the thrush up in the wood seems to answer them!"

Heathcote sat down on the step of the chair, and his mother laid her hand on his head tenderly and caressingly as of old.

"Will it be long before you are quite, quite well, mother?" he asked, looking up in her face.

"I cannot tell, darling; but if I am never quite, quite strong again, will you mind very much?"

"Not for myself," the boy said quickly; "only I know you like walking about so much, and writing and reading; and, mother, I *can't* quite see why it was you that should be hurt that day, and the others not one bit the worse for the accident."

"There was a good reason for it, my Heathcote. Think what it has taught us—lessons of faith and patience. Think how it has shown us the love and goodness of our friends; and think what it has taught *me* about you!"

Heathcote looked up quickly.

"About *me*?" he said.

"Yes, darling, about you; all my love and prayers and constant care for you have had a rich reward. In this time of trouble you have shown yourself able to rule your high spirit; and I think you have

learned to think more humbly of yourself. It is not so often now, 'Heathcote right and every one wrong.' You are a great comfort to me, dear!"

Oh, how sweet was this praise from his mother's lips, and how happy Heathcote felt as he scampered off to take a look at a little tank at the side of the road, where the green frogs were always to be found, and always to be heard croaking their hearts out in company!

Mrs. Dalton gained strength every day at San Remo, and Mr. More and Heathcote had many pleasant walks together, while Miss Egerton sat with Mrs. Dalton in the pretty garden before the hotel, or went for short expeditions in donkey-chairs. And during the last week of their stay, the fireflies in the garden at night realised Heathcote's dream. The air seemed alive with them, flashing in every direction, the brilliant pure lambent light so pure and bright in the darkness. "As if the stars had come down to dance amongst the orange trees," Heathcote said.

Mr. More laughed at the idea, but it made him talk to Heathcote of the immense speed with which light travels, and that by measuring, or rather calculating that speed, the distance of the earth from the sun and stars has been determined.

Standing on the terrace at San Remo, with the fireflies darting and flashing in and out, and the stars

shining so gloriously above, the boy's heart seemed impressed with the majesty and beauty of heaven and earth as it had never been before.

"How beautiful everything is!" he said, with a sigh, after a pause.

"Yes," Mr. More said, "your thoughts and mine were alike, Heather; only you spoke first. I was thinking of a great man, whose book you were reading the other day—'The Water Babies'—and puzzling poor Miss Smith with the 'ologies.' Well, to go back to the author of the 'Water Babies,' when he was lying on the threshold of the next life, he said, 'How beautiful God is!' He had loved all the beautiful things of the world as few men have loved them, but God in Christ Jesus was more beautiful than all. A night like this makes one full of thoughts of that other world, where Charles Kingsley is now learning the 'grand sweet song' of which he knew the melody here. Let us, you and I, my boy, try to see God in all His works, and, above all, His infinite love guiding, helping, and redeeming us."

Mr. More so seldom spoke like this that Heathcote was the more impressed by it, and they turned in silence to the hotel.

Presently Heathcote broke out in another strain, child-like—


"There are some ugly things even at San Remo

and Mentone. These big old prickly pears with their great fat leaves, no one could call them pretty. You know Hilda and Gerda, and Bellfield and I, wrote our names on one of them at Mentone. I wonder if we shall see our names there when we are men and women, when we grow up. We used to call Madame Le Brun a prickly pear; was not that a good name for her?"

"I wonder what is Madame Le Brun's name for you? Perhaps you would find it was not more complimentary than yours for her. Now we must not stay out a minute longer, or you will be taking a chill away from San Remo as a remembrance."

CHAPTER XXX.

MAYTIME ON THE MOOR.

 MAYTIME again on the Devonshire moors, and the little village of Canaton is full of rejoicing at the return of the travellers.

The Grange is all alive with the sound of childish voices, as Hilda and Gerda race through the rooms with Bellfield and Heathcote, and visit Snowball and Daisy in the stable-yard, and go to the lily pond and the farm. How delightful it was to the boys to show their friends all the places they had talked about—to introduce them to Sam and Bob Curtis, and, above all, to little Mary!

The patient, loving child still sat in the wide window-seat of the farm, gentle and uncomplaining, but she was weaker than before.

The cold winter and the frost and snow tried her much, and she had lost ground, Doctor Bayliss said, which perhaps the summer might help her to regain. Black-eyed Susie Curtis was grown into a really handy little maid, and Mrs. Forster said

she could not do without her now, she was so useful. If ever she had a wild, naughty fit, and was flighty and like "the Curtis lot," Mary could bring her to reason, and she always minded her. But these fits were very rare now, and Susan was a good child on the whole.

Then there was the cottage for Hilda and Gerda to see, and Busy and Bianca, and Penelope, who welcomed them graciously, and, after their first visit, told Heathcote they were "two little pictures."

"Just what you said of Bellfield, Penny! Well, I don't like picture-boys, but picture-girls are different. Girls have a right to be pretty and wear smart things. You like a smart bonnet, you know, Penny."

"I ain't a girl, my dear. Well, I did think, when I saw you turn and look at me last December, I should never have the heart to have a new bonnet again. But there! Patty Curtis said she would just furbish up the one I had last year, and mix in a little gold colour with the white. They do say that is the most worn nowadays. But your mamma, my dear Master Heathcote, she—well, she don't look as she ought to, and all from them foreign places. I do hate the thought of 'em, that I do."

"Well, Penny, mother was ever so much better for Mentone till that dreadful carriage affair. O Penny, Penny!" said the boy, "I wanted you then ;

"I thought my heart would break." And the boy threw his arm round his old friend's neck, his eyes dim with the memory of what he had suffered.

But very soon he had thrown off the passing sadness, and was ransacking his box for some treasures for Sam Forster, amongst which the spider's nest, carefully placed in a little paper box with cotton wool, was considered the choicest.

There were little gifts for every one in the village, and every one was full of brightness and happiness.

We will leave Heather and Harebell in the sunshine of the first bright Sunday after their return to Canaton.

The low pony-carriage, driven by Mrs. St. Aubyn, brought Maude Egerton and old Sir Percival Scott down to the little church, and Bellfield, Mr. More, and the little girls walked there with Mr. Randolph St. Aubyn. Heathcote and his mother came up the aisle together, and knelt in their accustomed place under the white marble tablet on which the boy had so often read his father's and his little brother's name. The space beneath had been left, he always knew, for his mother's name, and a sudden thrill of recollection of that dread moment at Mentone came over him as he looked up at it now after many months of absence.

Heathcote put his hand into his mother's as they stood up to sing the morning hymn, and he knew

by the fervent pressure she gave his, that she too was thinking of what might have been.

After the Litany Mr. Parker paused and then said—

“Grace and Heathcote Dalton desire to return thanks to God for His mercy in bringing them safely to their home again after the perils and dangers of their journey.”

Heathcote's heart gave a great leap, and then two or three quiet tears rolled down his cheeks as he heard the words—

“Particularly to those who desire now to offer up their praise and thanksgiving for Thy late mercies vouchsafed unto them.”

But it seemed to him that he had never felt so peaceful and so happy as when he went out into the churchyard and the kind villagers stood with smiles and greetings, and Bob Curtis with his hat in his hand offered his mother a beautiful early rose from the Vicarage garden.

In all this rejoicing Mrs. Dalton did not forget little Mary. She asked Heathcote to walk up with her to the farm that afternoon, and by leaning on her boy's shoulder and resting by the way she managed it pretty well.

“You can go up to the Grange, dear, for an hour and leave me with May,” she said, and Heathcote obeyed.

Poor little Mary! How she had longed for this meeting no words could say; and now it had come,

she could only lay her head on Mrs. Dalton's shoulder, as she sat by her, and cry quietly. Then Mrs. Dalton talked to her of all she had gone through, and told her of the goodness of God which had restored her to her boy, from the very gates of the grave.

The child listened with the deepest sympathy and attention; and then Mrs. Dalton said the psalm for the eighteenth day of the month, which seemed so beautifully to express the feelings of their inmost hearts—

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

Beautiful protecting wings of heavenly love! Under it we will leave the children on the moor, and the children who have read this little story of one year in their lives.

May God give His angels charge over them in their future life as in their past, to keep them in all their ways; and when the journey is over, and this world is passing away, may they still be safe under His feathers, and prove in rough places, as in smooth, that His faithfulness and truth have been their shield and buckler, as in time, so for all eternity.

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